

Rurouni Kenshin



SHONEN JUMP GRAPHIC NOVEL

Story & Art by

Nobuhiro Watsuki

volume

9



和月伸宏

NOBUHIRO WATSUKI



ABOUT THE "SECRET LIFE OF CHARACTERS"

IN WRITING ABOUT SAITŌ HAJIME ("SECRET LIVES [27]," VOLUME 7), ONCE AGAIN I RECEIVED READER RESPONSE. TO WIT: "ARE YOU TRYING TO PICK FIGHTS WITH YOUR READERS OR WHAT? IS IT REALLY IN YOUR BEST INTEREST TO DO SO?" ...UM, OKAY. LOOK. THE "SECRET LIVES" FEATURE ITSELF IS PROBABLY NOT IN A MANGA ARTIST'S BEST INTEREST. YOU'RE GETTING THE INSIDE SCOOP ON STUFF THAT WOULD ORDINARILY NEVER BE REVEALED. IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO MAKE *EVERYONE* HAPPY. IT'S A DIFFICULT THING, FAN SERVICE.

Rurouni Kenshin, which has found fans not only in Japan but around the world, first made its appearance in 1992, as an original short story in *Weekly Shonen Jump Special*. Later rewritten and published as a regular, continuing *Jump* series in 1994, *Rurouni Kenshin* ended serialization in 1999 but continued in popularity, as evidenced by the 2000 publication of *Yahiko no Sakabatō* ("Yahiko's Reversed-Edge Sword") in *Weekly Shonen Jump*. His most current work, *Busō Renkin* ("Armored Alchemist"), began publication in June 2003, also in *Jump*.

RUROUNI KENSHIN
VOL. 9: ARRIVAL IN KYOTO
The SHONEN JUMP Graphic Novel Edition

STORY AND ART BY
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Printed in the U.S.A.

Published by VIZ, LLC
P.O. Box 77010
San Francisco, CA 94107

SHONEN JUMP Graphic Novel Edition
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
First printing, November 2004



www.viz.com



SHONEN JUMP GRAPHIC NOVEL



Rurouni Kenshin

MEIJI
SWORDSMAN
ROMANTIC
STORY

Vol. 9
ARRIVAL
IN
KYOTO

STORY AND
ART BY
NOBUHIRO
WATSUKI

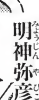
和伸
月宏

Once he was *hitokiri*, an assassin, called Battōsai. His name was legend among the pro-Imperialist or “patriot” warriors who launched the Meiji Era. Now, Himura Kenshin is *ruromu*, a wanderer, and carries a reversed-edge sakabatō to prohibit himself from killing.



THUS FAR

Okubo Toshimichi, head of the government's "Internal Affairs," tries to hire Kenshin to assassinate Shishio Makoto, the successor to "Hitotoki Battōrai." But it is Okubo who is assassinated, and Kenshin sets out for Kyoto to find his killers... despite the protests of Kaoru and the others. Kenshin says his farewells to Kaoru alone, declining the company of Saotō Hajime—an intelligence agent for the police and an ex-Shinsengumi—and sets out, on foot, on the East Sea Road. Through a strange twist of fate, he meets Makimachi Misan, a girl who admires a man Kenshin fought once before—Shinomori Aoshi, "Okashira" or "Head" of the Kyoto-based Oniwabanshū spy clan. While taking a shortcut through the forest, the two find an injured man and unconscious horse. They help him, but he begs to die. Then they die. Kenshin hears from the boy that his village is occupied by Shishio's men. Kenshin goes to the village to save the boy's parents, only to find their bodies strung up before him. The boy howls in sorrow. Suddenly, Shishio's men show up in order to rid the village of "intruders." Misan and the boy are saved—by Saotō Hajime.



緋村剣心（人斬り抜刀斎）

相樂左之助

卷町操

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Meiji Swordsman Romantic Story

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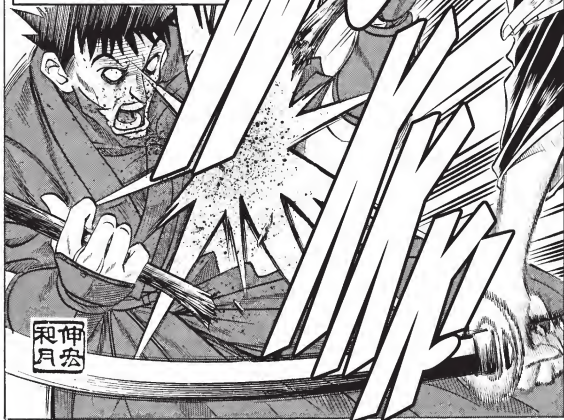
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Act 67
Birth
of a
Small
Champion





UHH...



HE'S NOT
EVEN
OUT OF
BREATH...



WHAT ARE
YOU WASTING
TIME HERE
FOR?

HEY.



SAITŌ...









IF WE TOUCH THOSE BODIES AND ANGER SENKAKU...

!



UNTIL SENKAKU PERMITS IT...



THEY
ARE THE
"PEOPLE
OF THE
VILLAGE"!!

ARE YOU
SAYING YOU'LL
OBEY THIS
SENKAKU EVEN
WHEN HE
TREATS YOU
LIKE THIS?!

WHAT
ARE YOU
SAYING?!



...WHILE, IF
WE SUBMIT
TO HIM, WE
HAVE LIFE,
AT LEAST.



IF WE
OPPOSE
SENKAKU,
WE'RE GIVEN
DEATH...

DO
YOU
HEAR?



EIJI.

IT'S BEST FOR
THE VILLAGE
NOT TO TAKE
MATTERS ANY
FURTHER. YOU
STRANGERS...



YOU...



...AND THE
MISHIMA
FAMILY...
MUST
LEAVE THE
VILLAGE
NOW.

FEW ARE
WILLING TO
RISK THEIR
LIVES TO
PROTECT THE
PRIDE AND
RESPECT OF
OTHER
PEOPLE.

DON'T
GET
ANGRY.



THEY NEED
NEITHER
PRIDE, NOR
RESPECT.

MOST ARE
CONTENT TO
LIVE. LIKE
LIVESTOCK.



WE WON'T
ALLOW YOU TO
TAKE DOWN THE
BODIES! NOW
HURRY AND GET
OUT OF HERE!

WHAT
DOES A
STRANGER
KNOW?

SAY
WHAT
YOU
WANT.



HIMURA
!



THAT'S
RIGHT!

IT'S ALL
BECAUSE
THE POLICE
ARE WEAK.
ANYWAY.







...IN
THE NEW
AGE
SHISHIO
BRINGS.

SO
THIS IS
TO BE
THE FUTURE
OF
JAPAN...



THEIR ONE
HOPE SIMPLY
TO LIVE,
FORGETTING
WHAT LIFE
IS FOR.

YOU
MURDER-
ERS!

**TROMP
TROMP**

IF THIS
VILLAGE
DIES, IT'S
YOUR
FAULT!

PEOPLE
GOVERNED
BY
VIOLENCE,
AND FEAR...



THE POLICE
NO LONGER
EVEN
PRETEND AT
RECAPTURING
THEM.



BUT WHY DON'T
YOU CALL IN
THE ARMY IF
THE POLICE
CAN'T DO IT?



WHAT
KIND OF
DUMB
REASON IS
THAT?!

IF THE
ARMY HAS
TO NEUTRALIZE
AN INTERNAL
SQUABBLE AGAIN, IT
WILL ONLY MAKE
JAPAN'S INSTABILITY
OBVIOUS TO
FOREIGN
POWERS.

FOOL. IT'S
ONLY BEEN
HALF A YEAR
SINCE THE
SEINAN
WAR.

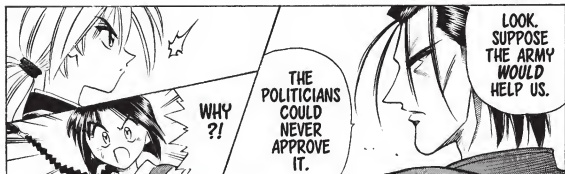


SAITŌ...

DID THE
GOVERNMENT
REALLY
ABANDON
THIS
VILLAGE?

AND
NOT JUST
THIS
ONE.

TEN
VILLAGES
HAVE BEEN
ABANDONED
TO SHISHIO
ALREADY.





WHO IS
IT THAT'S
GOING TO
SAVE THIS
VILLAGE?!

WHO
IS THIS
"SOMEONE
ELSE"?!



WHO
IS...
WHO...

...IS
GOING TO
AVENGE
THIS BOY'S
SORROWS?!



...THE
ARMY, THE
GOVERN-
MENT...

THE
VILLAGE,
THE
POLICE...

...ALL OF
THEM WILL
DO JUST AS
SHISHIO
MAKOTO
PLEASES.



THAT
IS WHY,
NOW...

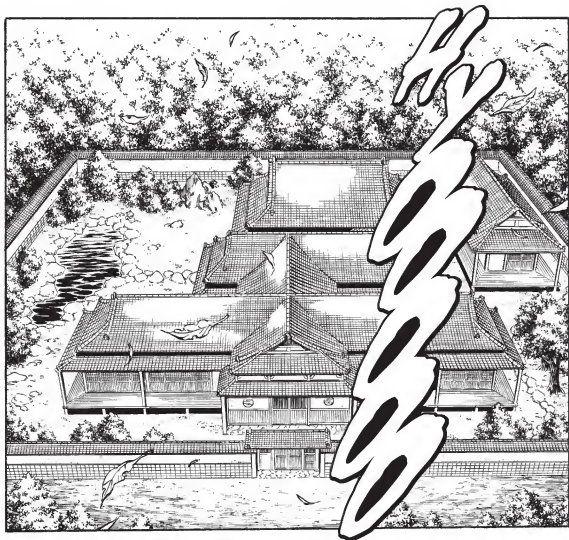
...HITOKIRI
AND
SHINSENGUMI
BOTH ARE
NEEDED.



WE KNOW
WHAT WE
MUST DO.

WE KNOW
THE LOCATION
OF SHISHIO'S
LAIR.





WE'RE
SEARCHING
FOR HIM
WITH
EVERYONE
WE HAVE, SO
PLEASE...

AT THE
CLIFFS OF
HAKONE,
HIMURA
BATTOSAI
JUMPED INTO
THE FOREST
SO SUDDENLY
THAT I
LOST HIM.



MY
DEEPEST
APOLOGIES,
SIR!



WHAT
SHALL
WE DO,
SHISHIO-
SAN?



DON'T
GROVEL. I
FORGIVE
YOU.

NOW GO
FIND BATTŌSAI
BEFORE I
CHANGE MY
MIND.

I TOOK MY
FIRST MEDICINAL
BATH IN
MONTHS TODAY,
AND I'M IN
A FINE MOOD.



SETA-
SAMA!



WHAT'S
WITH
THE
RACKET
?

UM...



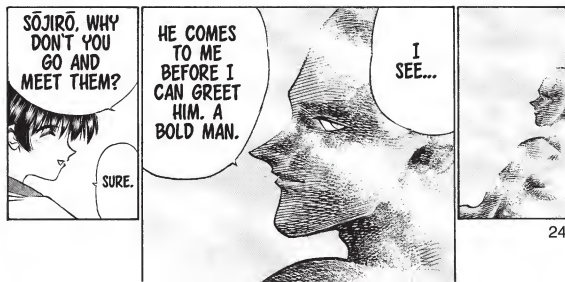
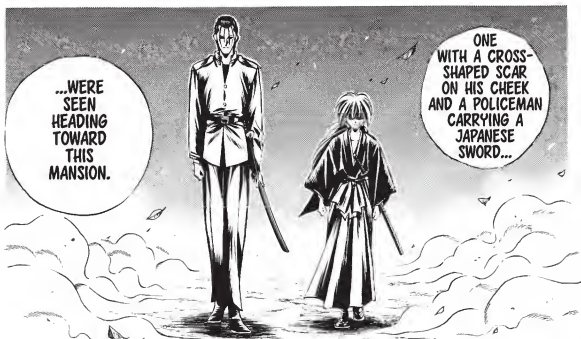
BUT THE NEXT
TIME YOU FAIL
US, I WILL NOT
FORGIVE YOU.



TH-
THANK
YOU SO
MUCH!

PHEW

LUCKY
YOU!





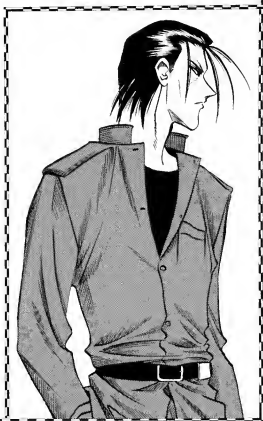
I'LL
KILL
YOU.

I'LL
KILL HIM
WITH MY
OWN
HANDS!!

CURSED
SENKAKU...

DNG

Rurouni Kenshin



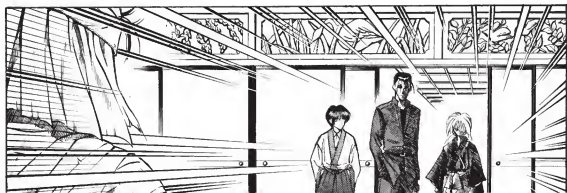
Act 68—A Portrait of the Ambitious





Act 68—A Portrait of the Ambitious







...SHISHIO
MAKOTO.

SO
YOU
ARE...



A
VISITOR
SHOULD
HAVE BETTER
MANNERS.

PLEASE!
"SHISHIO
MAKOTO-
KUN," AT
LEAST.



...WOULD
NEVER
RESORT TO
DIRTY
TRICKS.

HEH

I'M NOT
WORRIED.
HIMURA,
UNLIKE
YOU...

BATTOSAI
COULD TAKE
ONE LEAP
AT SHISHIO
AND KILL
HIM.

HEY. SHOULD
YOU BE
STANDING AT
EASE LIKE
THAT?

NOT THAT
YOUR MANNERS
HAVE BEEN
MUCH BETTER.

HE
SEES
CLEARLY.

TSK



HEY,
WAIT A
MINUTE!

WHERE
DO YOU
PLAN
TO GO
WITH
THAT?!



SHK



WHAT
ARE YOU
TALKING
ABOUT?
YOU CAN'T
DO THAT!

I'M
GOING TO
AVENGE MY
PARENTS.

TO
SHISHIO'S
MANSION.

IT'S
DO OR
DON'T!!

IT'S NOT
A MATTER
OF CAN
OR CAN'T
!!

YOWL

I HAVE
NO FEAR
FOR MY
LIFE.

I'M
ALONE
NOW.

HOLD
IT!

TM

YOU WON'T
EVEN GET
PAST THE
GATE!

MNG

THEIR BOSS
IS THERE—
SHISHIO. AND
THOSE SOLDIERS.
WITH THE
MASKS!

WHY?!
IF YOU
PLAN TO
STOP
ME—

I'LL
HELP
YOU
OUT.

SO...

HEH

...IDIOT.
SENKAKU
ISN'T THE
ONLY ONE AT
SHISHIO'S
MANSION!

I'M SORRY,
HIMURA...BUT
I'M GOING
TO HELP
HIM!



...THE
ONIWABANSHU...
NOTHING
WOULD STOP
ME FROM
AVENGING THEM!

I
UNDERSTAND
HOW YOU FEEL.
IF I FOUND
OUT THEY
WERE DEAD...



I DON'T
CARE IF YOU
COME, JUST
DON'T SLOW
ME DOWN.

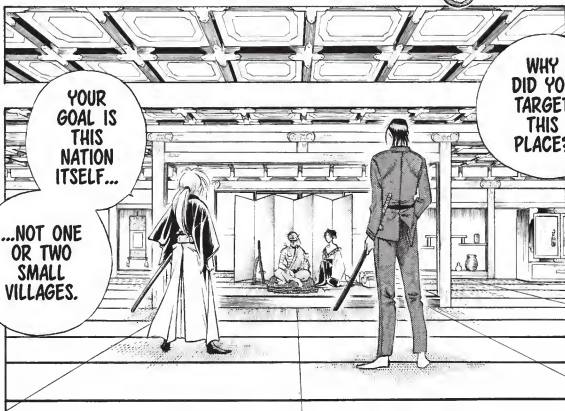


HSST

YOUR
GOAL IS
THIS
NATION
ITSELF...

...NOT ONE
OR TWO
SMALL
VILLAGES.

WHY
DID YOU
TARGET
THIS
PLACE?







"RELAX
YOUR GUARD,
AND BE
KILLED."

"TRUST,
AND BE
BETRAYED."

"KILL
BEFORE
YOU ARE
KILLED."

IN FACT,
I THANK THEM
FOR IT. THESE
WOUNDS BURNED
MANY LESSONS
INTO MY
BODY.

"WOMEN
WILL COME
TO A REAL
MAN NO
MATTER WHAT
HE LOOKS
LIKE."

AND
ALSO...

SIGH

WHY
CAN'T YOU
UNDER-
STAND MY
FEELINGS?

YOU AND I
AND BATTOSAI
HERE WERE ALL
MEN WHO LIVED
THROUGH THE
BAKUMATSU.

IT'S
TIRING TO
HAVE TO RUN
AROUND THE
COUNTRY
AFTER YOU.

IS THAT
SO? THEN
SHOULDN'T
YOU BE
MORE
CONTENT?

...BAKUMATSU
WAS THE FIRST
ERA OF *CHAOS*
IN 30 YEARS.

THE
EMPEROR, THE
SHŌGUN, THE
EXCLUSION OF
FOREIGNERS, THE
OPENING OF
THE PORTS...

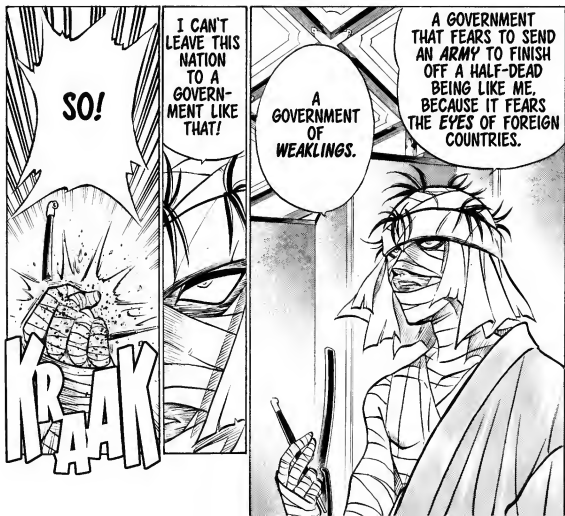
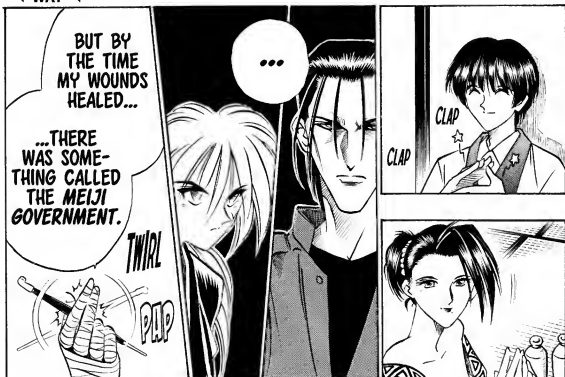
"...ALL CARRIED
THEIR BANNERS
OF 'RIGHT' THROUGH
ENDLESS KILLING."

"THE EMPEROR,
THE GOVERNMENT,
SATSUMA, CHŌSHŪ,
OR TOSA.

...MUST
BE A
MAN OF
UNQUENCHABLE
AMBITION.

A MAN
FORGED
IN SUCH
AN AGE...





...THEN I'LL
START ANOTHER
ONE! THIS
TIME I WILL
GAIN CONTROL!

IF THE
REVOLUTION
IS OVER...



THAT IS
THE "RIGHT"
I BRING
JAPAN.

HEH

THEN I
WILL MAKE
THE COUNTRY
STRONGER!



IT IS THE
FITTEST
WHO
SURVIVE
IN THIS
WORLD.

BUT I
WON'T
ASK
YOU TO
UNDER-
STAND
THAT.

...IT'S NOT YOU
WHO BLEEDS FOR
YOUR "RIGHT."

BUT...



THE
ONES
WHO
BLEED...

...ARE
THOSE
WHO LIVE
PEACEFULLY
IN THIS
AGE.



NO ONE
ELSE MAY
BE ALLOWED
TO BLEED...

SHISHIO
MAKOTO...

...FOR
YOUR
PERSONAL
"RIGHT."



NO...?

WELL,
IF FIGHT
WE
MUST...

TUM P

...BUT, IF
WE ARE
TO DO IT,
I'D RATHER
IT BE IN
KYOTO.

I HAVE NO
OBJECTION
TO
FIGHTING
YOU...

...HOW
ABOUT
YOU?

SAITŌ-
SAN...

I DON'T
MAKE A HABIT
OF SPEECHES
LIKE HIS...

...BUT MY
SWORD
TURNS
AGAINST
YOU, TOO.

GRM

...LET'S
LEAVE IT
TO THE
MAN...

...WHO
CONTROLS
THIS
VILLAGE...
SENKAKU!!!





HWAH

!!!



...THE MAN
WHO KILLED
EIJU'S
BROTHER AND
PARENTS.

SO
YOU
ARE
SENKAKU
...



HE'S QUICK.

HOO

HOO

!!

YOU'RE SLOW!

WUUUU

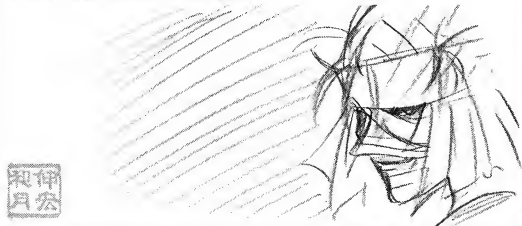


The Secret Life of Characters (24) —Shishio Makoto—

Ideally not a character who should be appearing in this space just yet, there've been enough questions about him that I'll give you a taste—but not too much of a taste.

Shishio was born of my editor's urging to "do a big story," and therefore has no model in terms of personality. I originally thought of him as a man out for revenge, since that would make it easier for me to express his grief concerning the government, but that made the story smaller in scale. Therefore, I decided that he would enjoy *at the same time* revenge and conquering, thereby making him a destructive being—kind of like Serizawa Kamo of the *Shinsengumi*. I also think there may be some influence from the maliciousness of *ShinSamurai Spirits*' "Kibagami Genjūrō."

I've heard a few theories as to what might be visual models, but actually it's "Aonuma Shizuma" of *Inugami Ke no Ichizoku* (The Inugami Family). I saw this movie as a child and was very influenced by it, so when it was decided Shishio would be burned over most of his body, I thought of a character wearing a rubber, human mask like Shizuma. That, though, would have made drawing expressions difficult—not to mention the difficulty of making rubber seem realistic in black and white. Additionally, the sheer agony of his condition wouldn't have been conveyed by it, so we settled on the figure we have today—all wrapped in bandages—except being wrapped up in bandages wouldn't look exciting—so we crisscrossed the bandages on his face, gave him some weird headgear, and otherwise fancied it up. How does it look...? I also wanted him to be cool, like Kibagami, so I gave him a scratchy-looking robe, a pipe, an umbrella, a folding screen... and a sexy companion. This is off-topie, but Shishio showing up just once during a Bakumatsu scene is totally Kibagami! (I didn't think I needed a pre-burn design for him, so didn't have one). To those of you who saw that and maybe got upset, my apologies.



Act 69

The Tactics of Battle



和伸
月宏



TAKE
DOWN?

ME?



YOU.

TRY
IT!!



...WILL
MAKE
YOU HIS
100TH!!!

SENKAKU,
WHO TO THIS
DAY HAS
CARVED UP
99 PEOPLE...

AND HERE I
THOUGHT YOU
WERE A
WARRIOR!

HEH

ONLY
99?

OH!

"SHIN-
SOKU"—
THE
FAMOUS
"GOD
SPEED"!

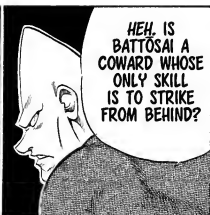


SENKAKU
NEVER
LOSES IN
SPEED.

BEHIND
ME,
BATTOSAI
!!

HSS!

NANAN



...AND THESE KNUCKLE BLADES TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF BOTH!

HOW!!

VNI VNI VNI

WAAAH!!

...AND THESE KNUCKLE BLADES TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF BOTH!

HOW!!

WAAAH!!

...AND THESE KNUCKLE BLADES TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF BOTH!

VWAHH!!

HOW!!

VWAHH!!

VWAHH!!

...AND THESE KNUCKLE BLADES TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF BOTH!

VWAHH!!

HOW!!

VWAHH!!

VWAHH!!



...NEED
GIVE HER
NAME TO
NO VILLAIN!

MAKIMACHI
MISAO...

AGH!

SHOOT!!

...YOU
JUST
DID.



—NEVER MIND THAT!
YOU'D ALL BETTER
GET OUT OF THE
WAY OR YOU'LL
BE SORRY!

'OR YOU'LL
BE SOR-R-RY!
SHEESH!

YOU
BRAINLESS
WENCH!

DN

I AM
NOT!

H
W
U
H!

BOOOOT

KK

ZIP

WHERE
IS
SENKAKU
?

TAKE
ME.

YOU'LL
SHOW
US THE
WAY.







EVEN
WHILE HE
WAS JUST
SMIRKING
AND SPEAKING
FREELY...

...ONCE
THE BATTLE
STARTED,
HIS EYES
CHANGED.



HE IS RECKLESS,
BUT HE HASN'T
LET HIS
GUARD DOWN.



HE'S TRYING
TO ANALYZE
EVERY MOVE
BATTŌSAI MAKES.

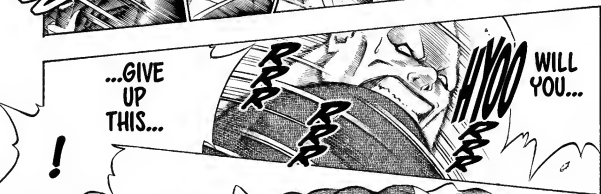


BATTŌSAI
OF COURSE
CAN FEEL
HIS EYES...

...AND
THAT IS WHY
HE IS WAITING
FOR HIS
OPPONENT'S SELF-
DESTRUCTION.

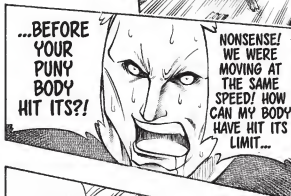


"SELF-
DESTRUCTION"?





MY...LEG
IS BROKEN...



...BEFORE
YOUR
PUNY
BODY
HIT ITS?!

NONSENSE!
WE WERE
MOVING AT
THE SAME
SPEED! HOW
CAN MY BODY
HAVE HIT ITS
LIMIT...



...SO THE
BURDEN
ON IT WAS
GREATER.

WE MOVED
AT THE SAME
SPEED, BUT
YOUR
BODY IS
HEAVIER...

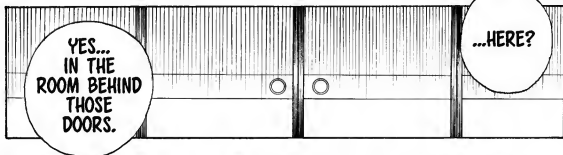


BY
MOVING
REPETITIVELY
WITHOUT
DROPPING
YOUR
SPEED...

...YOU'VE
EXCEEDED
THE IMPACT
YOUR BODY
COULD
STAND.









HITEN
MITSURUGI-
RYŪ...

...RYŪSHŌSEN
!

READ
THIS
WAY

THAT
KINDNESS
MAY COST
YOU YOUR
LIFE.

IDIOT...
TAKING PITY
ON THAT
MUSCLE-
HEAD...

TCH

TP

IT
DOESN'T
MATTER.

I'M
NOT SO
WORRIED
ABOUT
THIS
ONE...

...

The Secret Life of Characters (25) —Senkaku—

To be honest, Senkaku was *supposed* to be the first of the “Ten Swords,” so Watsuki went to a great deal of trouble in creating him. But then there were Sōjirō and Shishio—and Kenshin and the others needed to get to Kyoto—so Senkaku became a violent village despot.

At first the kind of character who could only yell “Gaaaah” or “Gnaaah” or things like that, Senkaku was an experiment—I’d never done an antagonist who didn’t speak. One editor’s comment during a meeting, though (“He’s not a wild animal”), quickly changed *that*. No model in terms of his personality, then; after the change, Senkaku was pretty much just muscle-head small fry.

Senkaku’s design originated during the designing of the four Abukuma priests. Created for defeat, I had no particular attachment to the four priests, but I was somewhat interested in how well I might be able to draw the different, bald heads. One was a cone-head, and I thought: *What a waste for an unimportant character.* So I used it for Senkaku, instead (though he turned out to be an unimportant character, too...). When I think back, probably I was influenced by the Coneheads in the Sega Saturn commercial, and by the Giant Soldier in *Nausicaä*. I still have my regrets about him; within my group of friends, he’s known as the “sexy dynamite” of *Rurouni Kenshin* (“especially,” they say, “in the groin area”). Very popular, needless to say. What I most regret is not being able to use his *hissatsu-waza* special technique, “Piercing Head-Butt.”

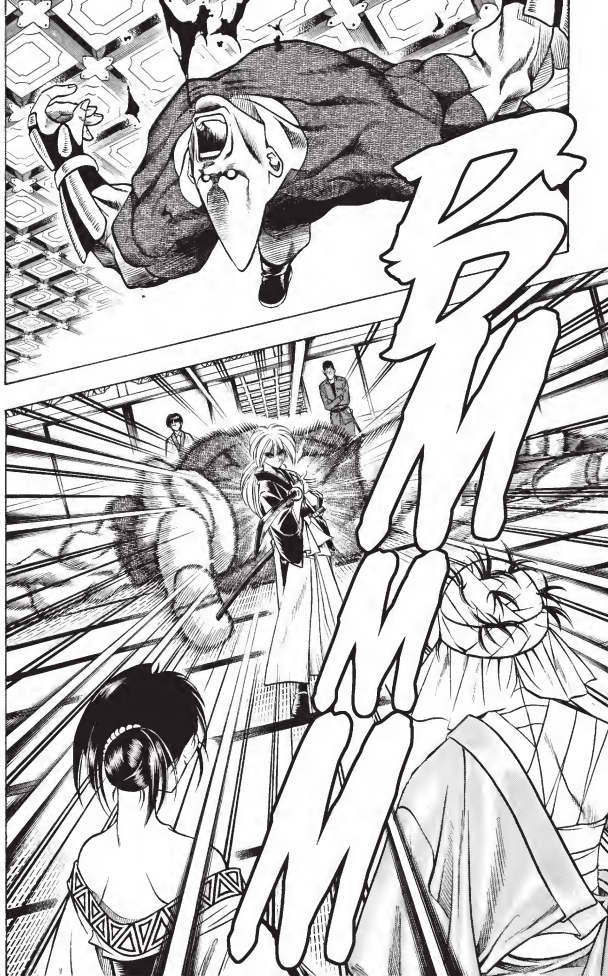


Act 70

The Sword of Heaven



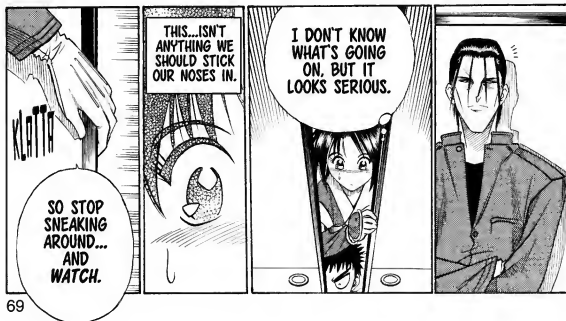
和伸
月宏





...GET
YOUR
SWORD...

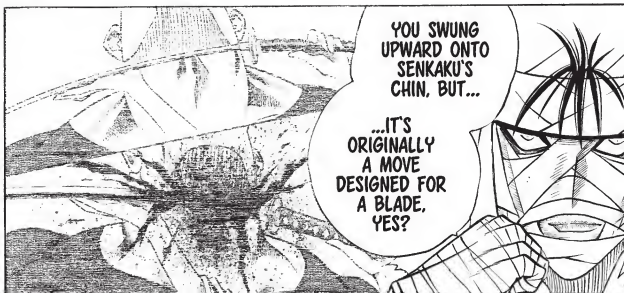
...SHISHIO
MAKOTO.



THIS...ISN'T
ANYTHING WE
SHOULD STICK
OUR NOSES IN.

I DON'T KNOW
WHAT'S GOING
ON, BUT IT
LOOKS SERIOUS.

SO STOP
SNEAKING
AROUND...
AND
WATCH.



YOU SWUNG
UPWARD ONTO
SENKAKU'S
CHIN, BUT...

...IT'S
ORIGINALLY
A MOVE
DESIGNED FOR
A BLADE,
YES?

I'D HEARD
FROM MY MEN
THAT YOU HAD
QUIT BEING
HITOKIRI AND
BECOME
RUROUNI...

...BUT I
COULDN'T
BELIEVE IT,
NOT TILL I
SAW WITH MY
OWN EYES.

I'M
DISAPPOINTED.

...YES.

...YOU
HAVEN'T
A
CHANCE
IN
HELL.

TO
TRY AND
BEAT
ME LIKE
THAT...

SNAP

AND I
DON'T LIKE
BORING
FIGHTS.





I'LL
WAIT FOR
YOU IN
KYOTO...

...SO
COME BACK
ONCE YOU'RE
HITOKIRI
AGAIN.

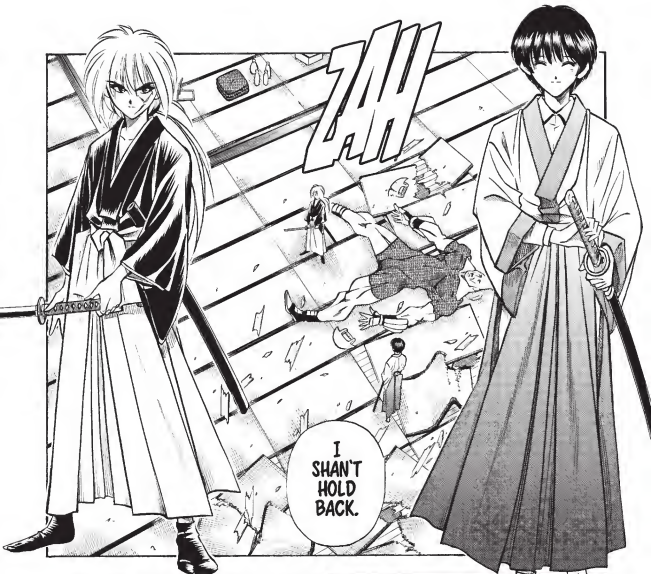


AH!

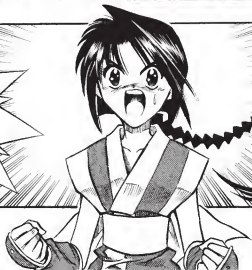
RUNNING
WITH YOUR
TAIL TUCKED
BETWEEN
YOUR
LEGS?

Hoo





IF YOU
DON'T HURRY,
THE BANDAGE
MAN IS
GONNA GET
AWAY!



HEY
HIMURA!
WHAT ARE
YOU DOZING
OFF FOR?!



I'VE
BEEN
DOING IT
MYSELF
FOR A
WHILE.

DIRECTING
KI TOWARD
HIM IS LIKE
PUSHING
ONE'S SELF
OFF
AGAINST A
CURTAIN.

WHAT
WAS
THAT?!

WH...

FUMP

?

**CIOP
CIOP**

WHAT
IS THIS
"TENKEN"
YOU SPOKE
OF?

SHISHIO-
SAMA.

HM.

**CIOP
CIOP**

THAT
MAN LACKS
NOT ONLY
BATTLE KI...

BUT THEN...
ISN'T BATTŌSAI
THE SAME?

A SWORD
WIELDED BY
HEAVENLY
SKILL.

THAT'S
HIS NAME.

HE IS
HEAVEN'S
SWORD.

PERHAPS.
BUT...

...SŌJIRŌ,
DUE TO THE
FAMILY
SITUATION
IN WHICH
HE GREW
UP...

...NOW
LACKS ALL
EMOTIONS
BUT RAKU—
"COMFORT."

...BUT
AGGRESSION,
AND RAGE.

NOR
HAS HE ANY
DO, OR
"ANGER,"
MEANING NO
AGGRESSION.

HE HAS
NO KI, NO
"JOY," SO HE
HAS NO
FIGHTING
SPIRIT...

SAITŌ HAS WANTED
TO ATTACK ME FOR
SOME TIME, BUT HE
HASN'T BECAUSE HE
CAN'T READ HOW
SŌJIRO WOULD ACT
IF HE DID.

THE WELL-TRAINED
SWORDSMAN ACTS
BY READING THE
OPPONENT'S EMOTIONS.
THAT DOESN'T
WORK ON SŌJIRO.



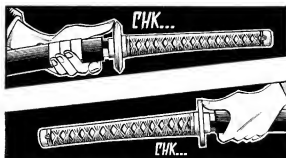
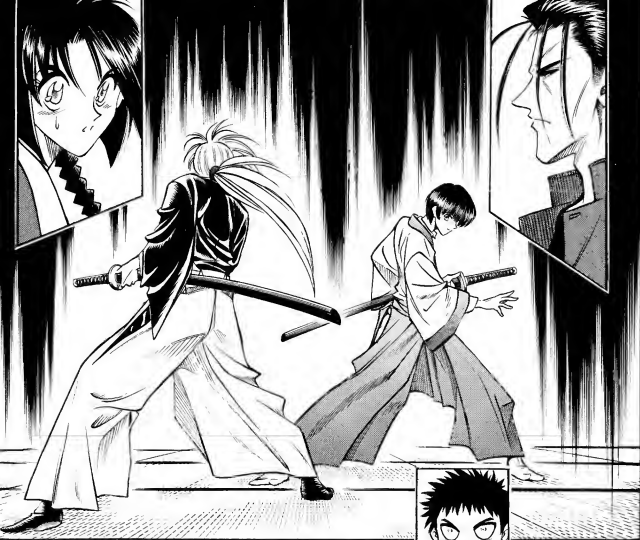
HIMURA!

...I
WON'T BE
ABLE TO
CATCH UP
TO
SHISHIO.

I'M
SORRY.
IF I
DON'T
HURRY...

WITH HITEN
MITSURUGI-
RYŪ, WHICH
RELIES ON
READING THE
OPPONENT'S
MIND...
...IT'S
ALL THE
MORE
HOPELESS.







...IS
EQUAL
!!

AND
THEIR
SWORD
SPEED...

THEN
THE
MATCH
WILL
BE...

...BATTŌ-
JUTSU.

HOWEVER...





...THE
SAME
"SWORD
OF
HEAVEN"
...

BETWEEN
BATTŌSAI, WHO
HAS SWORN
OFF KILLING
OTHERS, AND
SŌJIRO...

...IS A
VERY
DIFFERENT
WEAPON!

...WHO
KNOWS NO
AI, NO
"SORROW,"
AND THINKS
NOTHING OF
KILLING...



MATCH
OVER...

...YOU
THINK
?



YEAH.



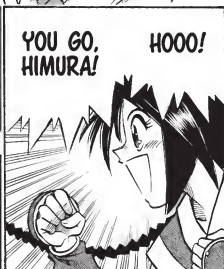
IT'S A
DRAW...

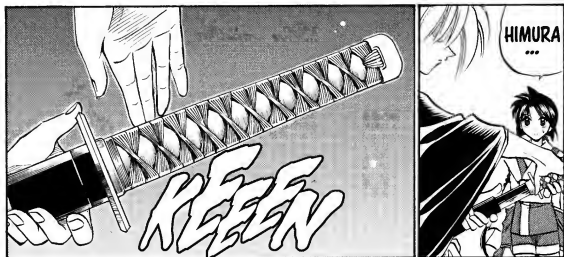
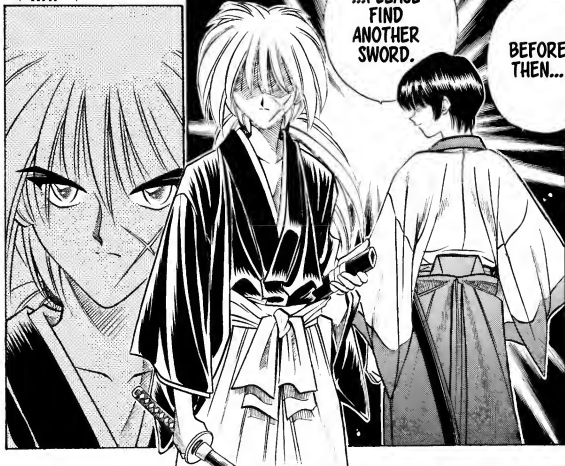
...BOTH
OF YOU,
UNABLE TO
CON-
TINUE.



UNLESS
HE IS
WILLING
TO KILL...

...BATTŌSAI
WILL
NEVER
BEAT
SŌJIRO.





The Secret Life of Characters (26)

—Seta Sōjirō—

Like Shishio, this character shouldn't be showing up in here just yet either, but I'll again give you another taste, since so many have asked.

Personality-wise, Sōjirō's model is Okita Sōshi, captain of the Shinsengumi first unit. The name "Seta Sōjirō" comes from "Okita Sōjirō"—Sōshi's name earlier in life. Since the name is the same, some readers have sought a connection between Okita and Sōjirō—but, let me just put this out there—there isn't one. Okita is just Seta's model.

Okita Sōshi is so famous there's no need to speak of him here—there's always a variety of books about him at the stores, if you're curious. He's so popular that, during the first "RuroKen" popularity poll, he ranked seventh... even though he'd only appeared in a few panels! Watsuki has used Okita as portrayed by [well-known historical novelist] Shiba Ryōtarō, but (this time) it's not the Okita of Shiba's "Moeyo Ken (Burn, O Sword)," but the Okita of "Shinsengumi Keppūroku (Record of Shinsengumi Bloodshed)" he's using... and *that* Okita has lost an important part of his human heart, making him emotionless and pretty scary. Some Shinsengumi fans are upset that a character modeled upon Okita is appearing as a villain, but since it's the "Keppūroku" Okita that's the model, I believe it works well, and helps to make Seta a strong antagonist.

Seta is more difficult to draw than first thought. As of present, I've only done about 1/4th of what I've imagined in my mind. I do want to do him justice, as he is such a popular character, but...

Design-wise, there's no real model. Okita was always envisioned by me with the bangs, and so when he came out looking like this, it was no surprise. I also gave him a slightly feminized air... so that a smile would look good on him.



Act 71—To Kyoto, Once More



**Act 71
To
Kyoto,
Once
More**



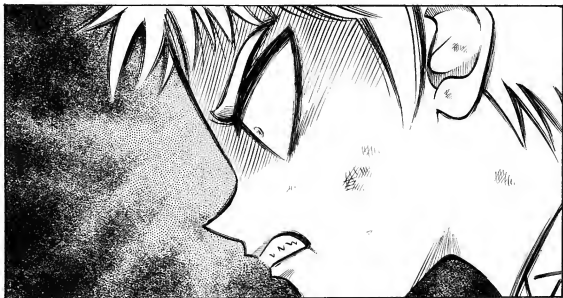
仲伸
月宏

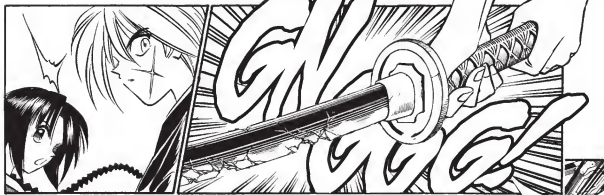


HE'S NOT
DEAD.



HE'S
BREATHING...





!

GRIP

NG

UWAH!





HE'S
NO USE
TO US
DEAD.

THERE'S
STILL TOO
MUCH WE
NEED OF
HIM.

REVENGE
KILLINGS WERE
OUTLAWED IN
THE SIXTH YEAR
OF MEIJI.

IDIOT.

THIS
IS MY
REVENGE!
DON'T
STOP
ME!

I'VE
ENOUGH TO
DO ALREADY.

◀ READ
THIS
WAY ▶

IT'S MUCH
CRUELER
THAN KILLING
HIM WHILE
HE'S UN-
CONSCIOUS.



HEH

...HE'LL
BE
TORTURED
AND THEN
EXECUTED.

Gotta

BESIDES,
IF HE'S
TURNED
OVER TO
THE LAW...

I DON'T
CARE
ABOUT
LAWS OR
EXECUTIONS
!

SHUT
UP!



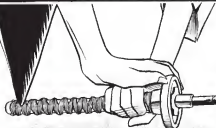
IF I DON'T
TAKE
REVENGE
WITH MY
VERY OWN
HANDS...

...HOW
CAN MY
FAMILY
EVER—?

A close-up, black and white illustration of a character's face, likely a woman with long, light-colored hair. She has a serious, somewhat somber expression, looking slightly downwards and to the side. Her hair is tied back with a small, dark, rectangular object.

...BUT
HAPPINESS
FOR THOSE
LEFT
ALIVE.

WHAT
THE DEAD
WISH FOR
IS NOT
REVENGE...

A close-up of a hand gripping the hilt of a sword. The hilt is wrapped in a textured, possibly braided or knotted material. The hand is positioned as if about to draw or hold the sword firmly.

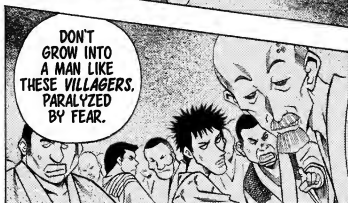
...NO
ONE WILL
BE
HAPPY.

IF YOU
DIRTY YOUR
HANDS
NOW...





DON'T
GROW INTO
A MAN LIKE
SHISHIO OR
SENKAKU.
OPPRESSING
OTHERS WITH
POWER.



DON'T
GROW INTO
A MAN LIKE
THESE VILLAGERS.
PARALYZED
BY FEAR.



AS TIME
PASSES,
THIS SMALL
HAND WILL
GROW
LARGER...



...AND
YOU WILL
BECOME
AN ADULT.



GROW
INTO A MAN
LIKE YOUR
BROTHER, WHO
WANTED, AT THE
END, FOR YOU
TO BE SAFE.



...AND TO
ACHIEVE
HAPPINESS.



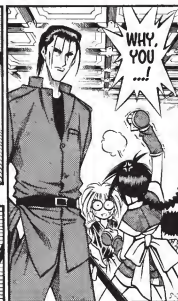
...I
GUESS
IT'S
SETTLED.

FOR
NOW, AT
LEAST...



SO,
"IT'S
SETTLED"
...

...IS
IT?



WHY,
YOU
...!



WIPE
YOUR
TEARS.

HERE'S
A FACE
CLOTH.



SURPRISE!



IF YOU'RE
GOING TO
GET MAD,
GET MAD AT
HIMURA.

I'M
NOT AT
FAULT.

SCRATCH
SCRATCH

I'VE
UNDER-
ESTIMATED
HIM.

DESTROYING
THE "NAGASONE
KOTETSU"
WITH A
SAKABATŌ.

IF IT'S
NOT ABOUT
PAYING YOU
BACK, GO
AHEAD.

SŌJIRŌ,
I'VE A
REQUEST
FOR YOU.

"KOTETSU"
IS ONE OF
THE 31 GREATEST
SMITHS. ANY
SWORDSMAN
WOULD KILL TO
POSSESS IT IF
HE COULD.

YOU'VE
GREAT
SKILLS, BUT
YOU'RE
IGNOR-
ANT.

KOTETSU
?

...AND
TELL
THEM TO
GATHER AT
KYOTO.

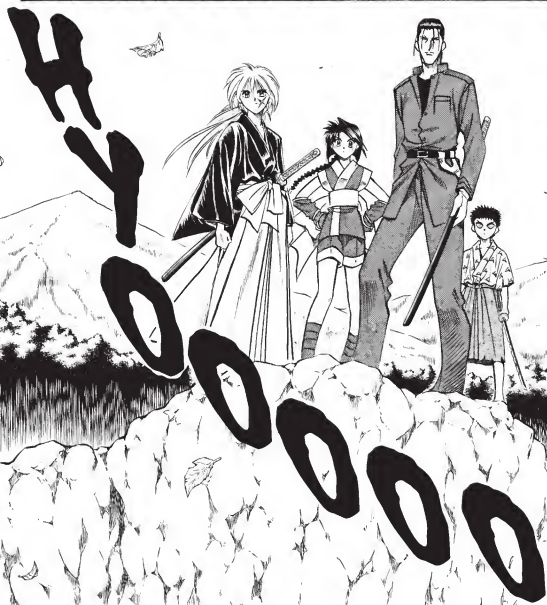
CONTACT
EACH OF
THE "TEN
SWORDS"
...



...TRAPPED
WITHIN
"HIMURA
KENSIN"
EVEN IF I
HAVE TO DO
IT BY
FORCE.

I WANT
TO PRY OUT
THE "HITOKIRI
BATTOSAI"...

HEH





NEITHER
YOU NOR I
CAN TAKE HIM
ALONG...

...SO I'LL
HAVE TOKIO
TAKE CARE
OF HIM UNTIL
THINGS SETTLE
DOWN.



"TOKIO"
?

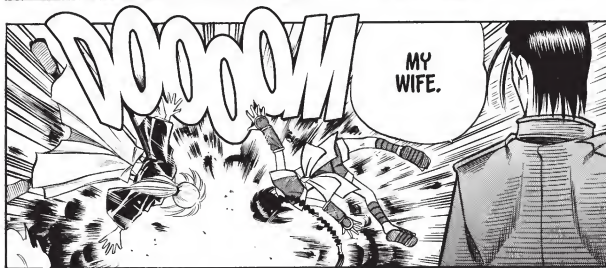


NOW...

IT'S
TIME FOR
ME TO
GO BACK.

ALL
RIGHT,
BUT...

...WHAT'S
TO BE
DONE
WITH EIJI?



MY
WIFE.



YOU'RE
MARRIED?

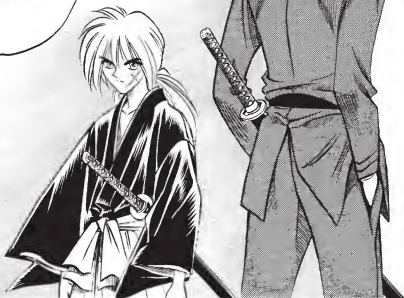
W-W-W-
WIFE?!

INDEED
HE IS.



QUIT
DITHERING
AND MAKE
THE
DECISION.

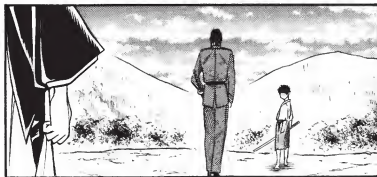
IT WAS
A GOOD
TIME FOR
YOUR
SAKABATŌ
TO BREAK.



...COUNTING
ON YOUR
PAST.

I'M
COUNTING
ON YOU...

THUD



HIMURA.





SO TURN
THAT
FROWN
UPSIDE
DOWN,
HUH?!

...BUT
THEY RAN,
AND WE
WON...

O-O-KAY,
SO MAYBE
I DON'T
GET IT...

...SO
IGNORE WHAT
SAITÔ SAYS...
HE DIDN'T DO
ANYTHING
ANYWAY!

HHMM



...OHH,
YEAH. HE'S
MUCH
BETTER.

I PREFER
THE HIMURA
WHO'S
RELAXED AND
SAYS "ORO."

LOOK! SPECIAL ABILITY:
"GIRL OF
100 FACES"!

...BUT
YOU'RE
KIND OF
SCARY,
TOO.

HIMURA,
YOU LOOK
IMPRESSIVE
WHEN YOU'RE
GRIM AND
SILENT...

RYUSHÖSEN



YOU
DON'T
HAVE
TO BE
RUDE
!

—HEY.



OH...
WELL,
IN
THAT
CASE...

WHAT
MISAO-DONO
LIKES IS
NOT OF
CONCERN.



THE
ANSWER...
LIES IN
KYOTO.

MUST THIS ONE
BECOME HITOKIRI
ONCE MORE...?



MEANWHILE
...

AND...

RRG. I
THINK I'M
ACTUALLY
LOST NOW.

WHICH
WAY TO
KYOTO,
AGAIN...?

BLAST
IT.



The Secret Life of Characters (27) —Mishima Eiji—

The “Shingetsu Village” episode was meant to suggest a miniature version of Japan under Shishio’s rule—i.e., as having a dark atmosphere. It was also a very offbeat “*Ruroken*” plotline. Between the tragedy of the story, and as the symbol of a new beginning, Eiji was born. Reading back now, I regret how he’s pulled around by the plot and doesn’t have much room for development as a character. Eiji’s central theme is “revenge”—a theme huge to the entire series. Already in the near future there’s another episode planned with “revenge” as its main theme. Of course, it’ll come *after* the Kyoto story are....

Another thing I’d hoped to portray with this episode was the ugly “village mentality” distinct to Japanese culture, but it didn’t end up working out well. It seems it’s difficult, portraying such a dark thing in adventure manga.

There’s no model in terms of Eiji’s design; I was short on time when I created him (I never seem to have enough time as of late), and had been doing a slightly long-haired young man, but since he didn’t look like a village boy, I whited him out and drew him over, resulting in the finished version. (In his first, weekly magazine appearance—when he’s being held by his nearly dead brother—you can see the earlier design. I fixed him for the graphic novel version you’re reading now, though.)

There was no time for his costume, either, so I asked an assistant to “put some kind of pattern on the shirt, and tone on the pants,” and that’s how it turned out. The costume does maybe look a little too similar to Yahiko’s... Cutting corners is never good. I should do this stuff myself, no matter how busy I am.





Act 72
Encounter
in the
Forest
(Part I)

伸
月
宏



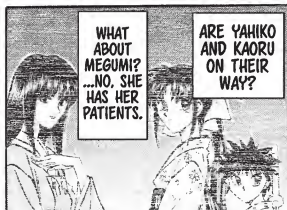
MORE
PRESSING—
WHERE IN
HELL IS
THIS?!

BLAST
IT. WHICH
WAY TO
KYOTO,
AGAIN?



...REACHED
KYOTO
YET?

HAS
KENSHIN...

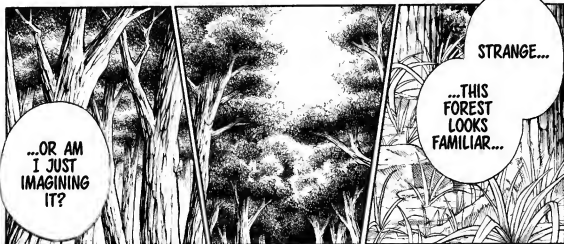


WHAT
ABOUT
MEGUMI?
...NO, SHE
HAS HER
PATIENTS.

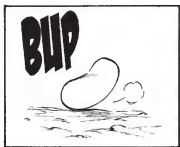
ARE YAHIKO
AND KAORU
ON THEIR
WAY?



HMPH.



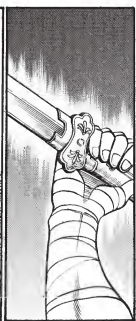
DOOOOOO!!!





煩苦餓鬼
飢餓苦畜生
慮迫苦勞永

煩苦餓鬼
飢餓苦畜生
慮迫苦勞永



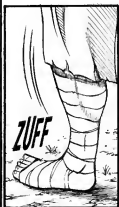




...HUH.



THAT WAS...
SOMETHING.



ZUFF



ZK...



...HÖRIKI,
RIGHT? FIRST
I'VE EVER
SEEN 'EM
USED.

HEH

POWERS
BORROWED
FROM THE
BUDDHA BY
AN ADEPT
PRIEST...



FIRST
TIME AT
BEGGING,
IS IT?

AN' IF YOU
GOT ANY
FOOD, CAN I
HAVE IT?



ARE
YOU
LOST?

CH-
KEEN

YEAH.
MIND
SHOWING
ME THE
WAY?





PLUS, I
GOT TO SEE
HŌRIKI IN
ACTION.

DON'T
BE. YOUR
TRAINING'S
GOT ME A
HOT MEAL.

...AH,
NOW I SEE.
"DIRT
DUMPLINGS,"
BECAUSE
OF ME.

SORRY
ABOUT
THAT.

HA

HA

KRAK!

KRAK!



THOSE
WERE **NOT**
BUDDHIST
POWERS.



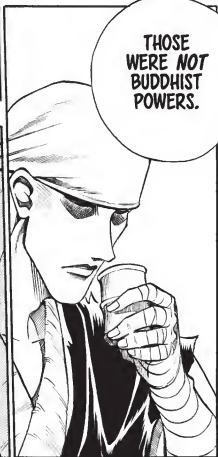
...THEY'RE
NOTHING I
WOULD BE
ABLE TO
USE NOW.

AND
EVEN IF
THERE
WERE SUCH
THINGS...



HŌRIKI
ARE ONLY A LIE
INVENTED TO
TRICK PEOPLE
INTO
BELIEVING.

EVEN I,
AN ADEPT ON
THE PATH OF
BUDDHISM,
HAVE NEVER
SEEN THEM.



FALLEN PRIEST

A DISGRACED OR CORRUPTED PRIEST WHO FEELS NO SHAME IN VIOLATING THE DIRECTIVES OF THE BUDDHA.

THEN YOU'RE...

...A FALLEN PRIEST?

YES...

...WHAT'S WITH THE TRAINING?

BUT IF YOU HAVE ABANDONED BUDDHA...

NO WONDER YOU HAVE THAT EVIL-LOOKING FACE...

AND IT CANNOT BE BY THE BUDDHA'S HAND.

MY BELIEFS MAY HAVE BEEN ABANDONED... BUT NOT MY WILL TO SAVE THE WORLD.

LOOK WHO'S TALKING.

...BUT,
TO DO SO,
THEY MUST
SURPASS
THE GODS.

ONLY THE
HANDS
OF MEN
CAN SAVE
THE WORLD
OF MEN...



...BY
GIVING
IN TO
TEMPTATION.

SO YOU
DIDN'T
"FALL"...

NO
POINT IN
EXPLAINING,
THEN.



DO YOU KNOW
ABOUT THE
MOVEMENT TO
ABOLISH BUDDHISM
OF 10 YEARS
AGO?

WHATEVER.
DOUBT I
COULD DO
ANYTHING
ABOUT IT
EVEN IF I
HAD.

BY
THE
WAY...

I TRY
TO ATTAIN
SUCH
POWER.



...DOES
THAT MEAN
A NON-
BELIEVER
LIKE ME
CAN LEARN
IT?

...IF THAT
THING YOU
DID BACK
THERE
WASN'T
HÖRIKI...



WHAT, IS
THIS ONE
OF THOSE
ZEN
RIDDLES
...?

WHY
DO YOU
DESIRE
POWER?



WELL,
TO PUT
IT
SIMPLY...

ANSWER.



I WON'T
TURN IT
TO EVIL OR
NOTHIN',
SO...

WILL
YOU
TEACH
ME?



...MORE
POWERFUL
THAN I
AM.

...I
JUST
WANT TO
BE...

I
GUESS.



WELL...
COMPARED
TO YOUR
SAVING
THE WORLD,
YEAH.

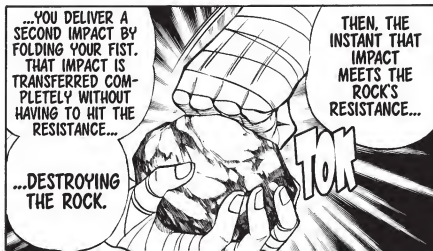
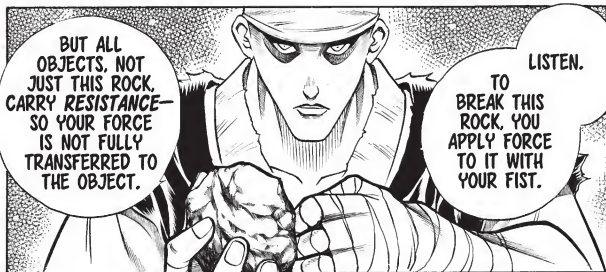
...A VERY
PERSONAL
REASON.

BESIDES,
I'D HATE
TO GET
BETTER BY
LISTENING
TO HIM.

"A MAN I FOUGHT
BEFORE LEAVING
TOKYO TOLD ME
MY DEFENSE WAS
WEAK. I'VE BEEN
THINKING ABOUT
IT FOR A WHILE..."

"...BUT HIS
STYLE
ISN'T
MINE."







"THE
MASTERY
OF TWO
LAYERS."

THAT IS
THE SECRET
I'VE DEVELOPED
OVER 10
YEARS OF
TRAINING...



TRY
IT.

HH



WITH IT, ONE CAN
PERFORM SUCH
FEATS AS THE
"DISTANT HIT"
I WAS JUST
ATTEMPTING.



...OVER-
SIMPLIFIED
...

THAT'S.
UH...

NIGHT??

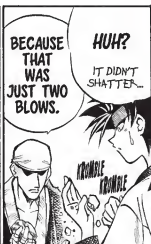


HSS...

...



THE IMPACTS
MUST BE
QUICK. IT IS
WITHIN A
SETSUNA*...



BECAUSE
THAT
WAS
JUST TWO
BLOWS.

HUH?

IT DIDN'T
SHATTER...



HAH!

*1/75TH OF A SECOND



...MAKE
YOUR
SECOND
STRIKE!

...THAT
YOU
MUST...



FROM THE TIME I
UNDERSTOOD THIS SECRET,
TO THE TIME I DESTROYED
A ROCK...ONE MONTH.



YOU
HAVE THE
SAME.

MASTER
IT WITHIN
A MONTH...
OR DIE
HERE.

READ
THIS
WAY

YOU'RE A
FALLEN
PRIEST,
ALL
RIGHT.

WOULD
YOU?

YOU SAID
YOU'D
GIVE
YOUR
LIFE.

"YOU
WILL DIE"
DOESN'T
SOUND
VERY
PRIESTLY.

IT IS NOT
SOMETHING
I WANT TO
SPREAD BY
TEACHING
TO JUST
ANYONE.

THE
"MASTERY
OF TWO
LAYERS" IS
AN ABILITY
DEVELOPED
TO SAVE THE
WORLD.

BUT I DON'T
HAVE ANY TIME
TO WASTE ON
TRAINING!

GRIN

...FINE. I'LL
GIVE MY
LIFE.

I'LL
MASTER
THIS "TWO
LAYERS"
STUFF
WITHIN A
WEEK!!

I
DON'T
NEED A
MONTH!



Rurouni Kenshin



Act 73 Encounter in the Forest (Part II)



和月伸宏



EASIER
SAID..

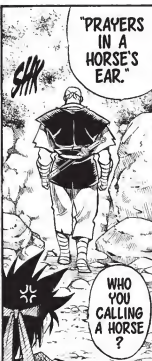
...THAN
DONE.





VERY WELL.
THE TIME
LIMIT IS
ONE
WEEK.
YOU'VE
FOUR
DAYS
LEFT.

GG
IF YOU
CANNOT
PERFORM THE
TWO-LAYERS
STRIKE BY
THEN...



SHK
"PRAYERS
IN A
HORSE'S
EAR."

WHO
YOU
CALLING
A HORSE
?



...YOU
CAN'T
JUDGE
UNTIL FOUR
DAYS FROM
NOW.

POSSIBLE
OR IM-
POSSIBLE...



...THEN I WILL
SEE YOU DEAD,
AS PROMISED.

...ARE
ON!

YOU...



DAY
FOUR

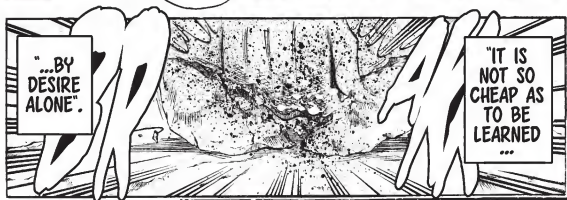




THE
"MASTERY OF
TWO LAYERS" IS
THE PINNACLE
OF 10 YEARS
OF TRAINING.

...YOU
WON'T
ATTAIN
IT.

DAY
FIVE



"...BY
DESIRE
ALONE".

"IT IS
NOT SO
CHEAP AS
TO BE
LEARNED
..."



WOBBLE



DAY
SIX



SLAP



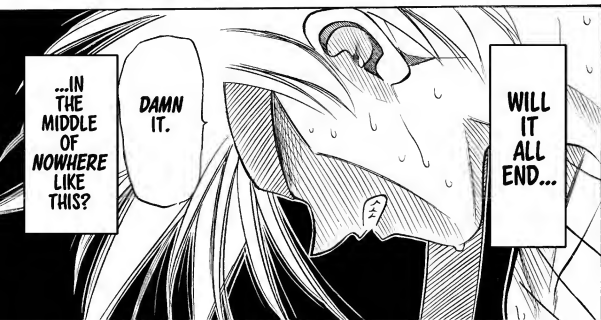
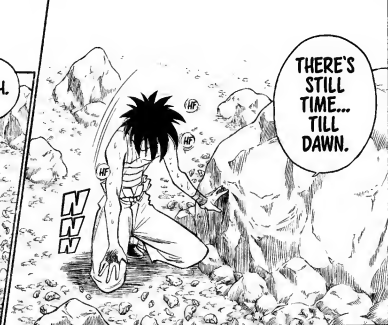
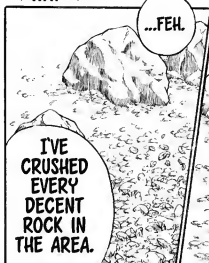
HUH

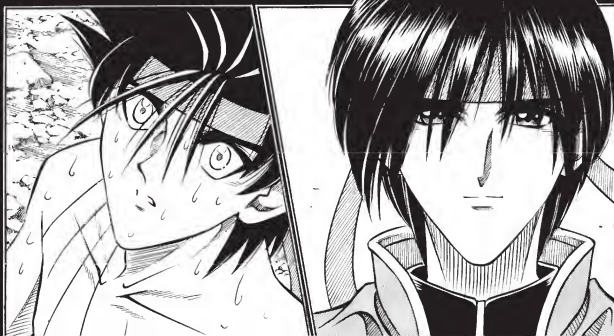
NOT...
YET...

HUH



DUNK







Long time no see. Watsuki here. By the time this volume hits store shelves (in Japan) the TV anime should be just starting. Let me say this right now, though—I have no control over the anime. There's no point in sending me letters about voice-actors, or what you hope to see animated—please direct those to the production company, and to the (Shueisha's) anime department. I'll take full responsibility for opinions, desires, and objections to the manga, but I can't take responsibility for how well or how badly the TV show turns out. I can believe only in the professionalism of the anime staff, and let them do their stuff. I'm hoping for the best possible outcome, of course—if it does badly, it'll affect Watsuki's career as a manga artist! Therefore, please watch at least 10 episodes or so, huh? See you.

和伸
月宏





IT'S
ALL
RIGHT,
SANOSUKE.

YOU'VE
DONE
ENOUGH.



JUST
FORGET
IT
ALL...
AND
REST.

THAT'S
AN
ORDER.

IF YOU
DO KEEP
PUSHING
YOURSELF
...

...THAT
ITSELF
MAY END
YOUR LIFE.

IF YOU
ADMIT YOUR
DEFEAT, HE
PROBABLY
WON'T TAKE
YOUR LIFE.

YOU'VE
PUSHED
YOURSELF
TO YOUR
LIMITS.



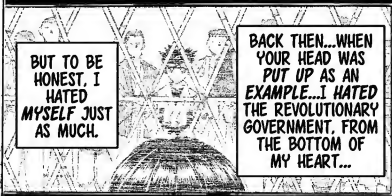
...THAT
ORDER.

I
CANNOT
OBEY...

...I'M
SORRY,
CAPTAIN.



I WAS SO **ANGRY** WITH MYSELF FOR BEING UNABLE TO DO ANYTHING WHEN THE MAN I RESPECTED MORE THAN ANY OTHER WAS KILLED.



BUT TO BE HONEST, I HATED MYSELF JUST AS MUCH.

BACK THEN...WHEN YOUR HEAD WAS PUT UP AS AN EXAMPLE...I HATED THE REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT, FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART...



NOW HE'S INVOLVED IN A GREAT BATTLE, AND MAY DIE.

TEN YEARS LATER...AS I GREW MORE AND MORE BITTER... A GOOD MAN CAME, AND WOKE ME UP.



...THE RAGE I KNEW 10 YEARS AGO.

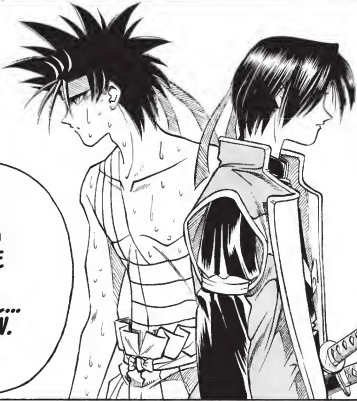
I DON'T WANT TO RELIVE...



"...KNOW THAT FEELING, EITHER."

ORO!

"AND I WON'T LET ANYONE ELSE..."



...HAVE
GOT TO
BECOME
MORE
POWERFUL...
AND NOW.

THAT'S
WHY I...

...WITH
THIS VERY
FIST...!

GNG
...

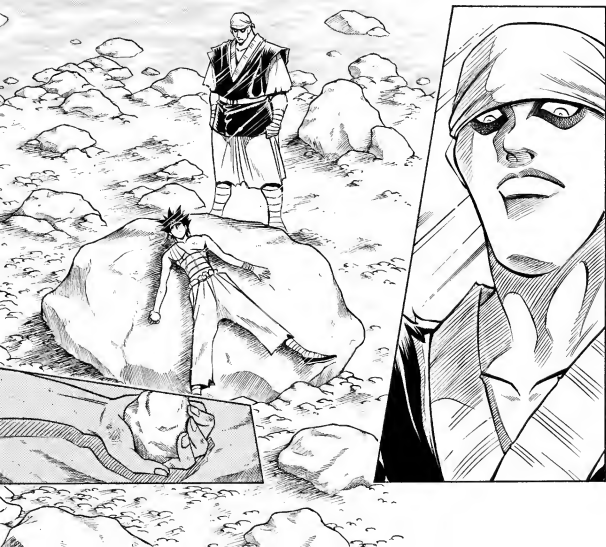
THE POWER
TO STRIKE AT
ALL THE
WORLD'S UNJUST
VIOLENCE...



I'M
HAPPY...
TO SEE
YOU
AGAIN,
HOWEVER
SO.

AS
DREAM...
HALLUCINA-
TION...

...OR
GHOST
...





BUT...
FROM
THAT ROCK
IN YOUR
RIGHT HAND...
I CAN SEE
YOU WERE
UNABLE TO
MASTER
THE TWO
LAYERS.





...PRIEST.
I ALMOST
DIED,
THERE.

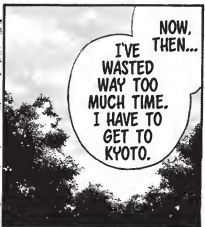
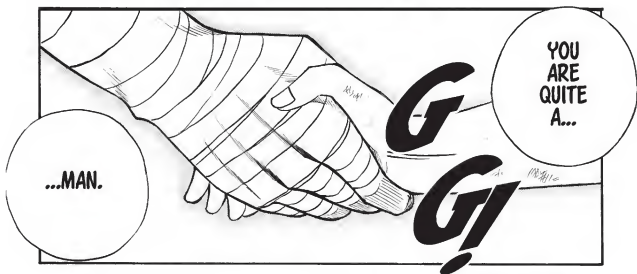
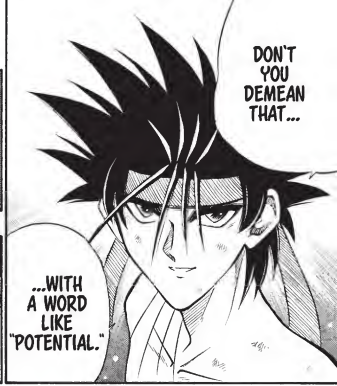


...YOU
HAVE
SOME
POTENTIAL.

BUT
ONCE I
GOT THE
HANG OF
IT, SO
WHAT?



OH, I
MASTERED
IT, ALL
RIGHT.



READ
THIS
WAY





AND
I AM
YÜKYÜZAN
ANJI.

FAREWELL.



I'M
SAGARA
SANOSUKE,
BY THE
WAY.

THANKS
FOR THE
HOSPITALITY.

LET'S
MEET
AGAIN IF
WE'RE
MEANT
TO.



JUST
THE OTHER
DAY, HE
WAS A MERE
HATCHLING...

OVERNIGHT
HE'S
BECOME A
BIGGER
MAN.



...AND YET,
TODAY, HE'S
LIKE A YOUNG
BIRD LEAVING
THE NEST.



SŌJIRO-
DONO.

OH,
THERE
YOU
ARE.

I'VE BEEN
LOOKING
FOR YOU,
ANJI-SAN.



THE
ENTIRE
"JUPPON-
GATANA"...

...HAS
BEEN
SUMMONED
TO KYOTO.

THE
BATTLE
IS
BEGINNING!

...TO THE
TURBULENCE
OF KYOTO.

AND
SO THE
STAGE
MOVES...

The Secret Life of Characters (28) —Yūkyūzan Anji—

This character had been almost entirely developed before the publication of "*Ruroken*"—to prove it, he appears in "*Rurouni*" as an extra (come to think of it, I think Sōjirō appears as an extra himself). When it came time to decide Anji's backstory, though, and to determine whether he was friend or foe, I couldn't quite pull it together and he stayed in storage... until now. As the story progressed, I felt the need for Sanosuke to become more powerful, so Anji appeared as a counterpart to Sanosuke's fighting style. That way, I was able to kill two birds (Sanosuke's power-up, and his need for a strong foe) with one stone... and it'll add depth to their battle, in the future. Anji carries a cross representing the Buddhism abolition movement, so the tension between them is going to be quite thick. (I want it to happen now!)

In terms of personality, there's no model, but I picture him somewhat like Shimada Kai—a Shinsengumi Lieutenant—due to his manly air. Anji is also my second attempt at "macho intelligence," at which I failed quite utterly with Raijūta.

Unusual for Watsuki, his visual model came not from manga or a video game, but from the lead vocalist of a punk band called "Angle"—since disbanded. (I don't need to explain that "Anji" comes from "Angle," right?) With bandanas on shaved heads and black makeup beneath their eyes, somehow they still gave an impression of intelligence, and looked cool. When designing Anji, I wanted to make him a "power-fighter," but settled for macho. Instead, I like their song "Silver Wristwatch" (it's a best-of-the-best), so give it a listen if you have the chance. Watsuki is greatly influenced by manga and video games, but Angle and Kin'niku Shojo-tai, another band, have influenced him a lot, too.



Act 74

Arrival in Kyoto

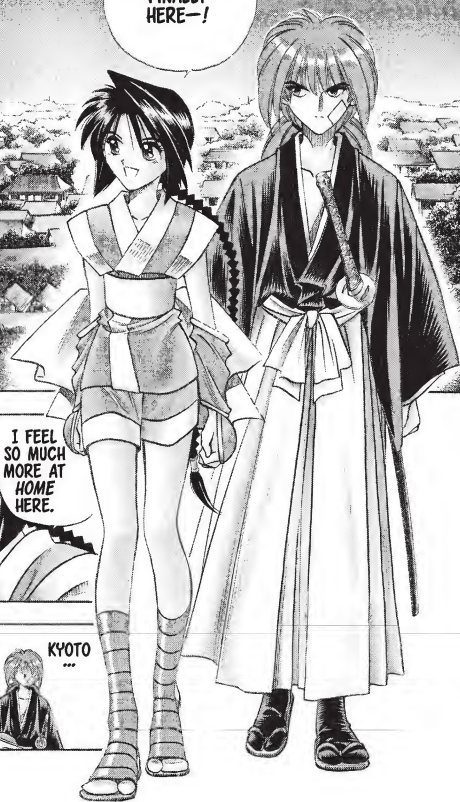


KYOTO

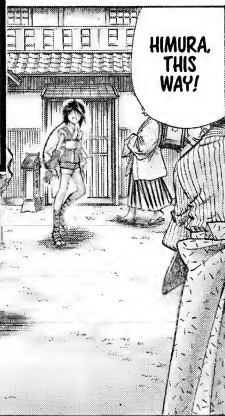
A CITY IN THE PLAINS OF THE KINKI REGION, A CENTER OF ARTS AND CRAFTS, AS WELL. IT HAS BEEN OVER A THOUSAND YEARS SINCE THE CAPITAL WAS MOVED ELSEWHERE (IN 794), THUS ITS OTHER NAME, SEN'NENOKI ('MILLENNIUM KING'S CASTLE').



WE'RE
FINALLY
HERE—!



IN EVERY
SEASON, ITS
BEAUTY IS
UNPARALLELED
IN JAPAN,
BUT...



HIMURA,
THIS
WAY!

...AND NEVER
DID THIS ONE
THINK TO SET
FOOT HERE
AGAIN.



TEN YEARS OF
WANDERING
SINCE THE
REVOLUTION...



I FEEL
SO MUCH
MORE AT
HOME
HERE.

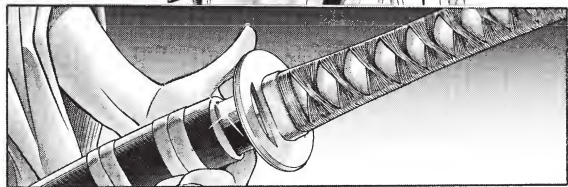
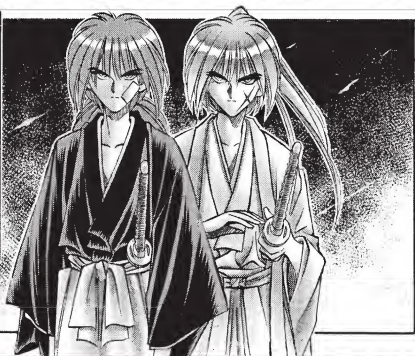


KYOTO
...



...BEHIND
ITS BEAUTY
LURK
MEMORIES OF
EVIL, RESTLESS
SPIRITS,
ECHOING ITS
CENTURIES OF
FAMINE, PLAGUE,
AND WAR.

DURING THE
BAKUMATSU,
KYOTO KNEW
NO DAYS
WITHOUT
BLOODSHED
AND ROLLING
HEADS. IT WAS
A PORTRAIT
OF HELL.



HIMURA!!



AND CAN'T YOU DO
SOMETHING ABOUT
THAT SWORD? IT
ATTRACTS WAY TOO
MUCH ATTENTION.



WHAT DO
YOU MEAN,
"ORO"? WHY
ARE YOU SO
OUT OF IT?

YOU'VE
BEEN WEIRD
SINCE WE
ENTERED
KYOTO.



ORO?

WHAT
DID YOU...?!

RG!

AND IF MISAO-DONO
WERE PERHAPS
TO CHANGE HER
OUTFIT...

ORO!

BWAAH-KAH

"BIRD-
KICK OF
RAGE!"

CONCLUSION:
IT'S THE TWO
TOGETHER
THAT'S THE
PROBLEM.



...WHERE
IS YOUR
HOME?

REALLY,
MISAO-DONO,
YOU SHOULD
HEAD HOME.

YOUR
PEOPLE MUST
BE GETTING
WORRIED,
AND...

ORO.

RIGHT
OVER THERE.
WE'RE HERE
ALREADY.

SEE
?

GRAMPS!
HEY—!

YUP.
AOI-YA.
WE'RE
FAMOUS
IN
KYOTO.

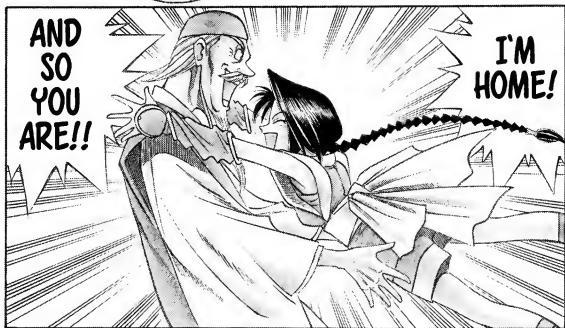
...OH.

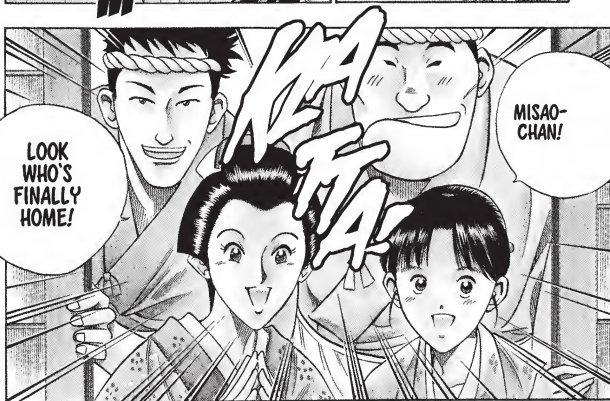
AN
INN...

葵屋

葵屋

葵屋







HOLD ON,
YOU! I HAVEN'T
THANKED
YOU YET.



TP

THEN
IF YOU'LL
EXCUSE...

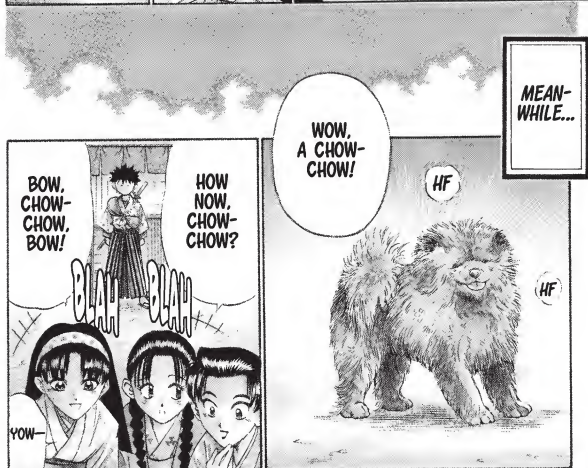
...HIMURA
BATTŌSAI-
DONO.

PLEASE,
MAKE
YOURSELF
AT HOME...

SHE'S
ASKING
YOU TO
STAY.

SHIRO AND KURO
WILL MAKE YOU
THEIR BEST
DINNER TONIGHT.

YOU'LL
LOVE
IT!



WE HAVE
TO FIND
TAE-SAN'S
FAMILY HOME.

LODGING'S
TOO
EXPENSIVE.
I'LL TELL
MY FAMILY
YOU'LL BE
STAYING
WITH THEM.

...KAORU AND
YAHIKO HAVE
ARRIVED IN
KYOTO BY
BOAT.

STILL, THIS
IS THE
MILLENNIUM
ROYAL
CASTLE...

IF I HADN'T
HEARD IT WITH
MY OWN EARS...

WILL
YOU QUIT
FOOLING
AND HELP
ME?!

...IT'S
SO HARD
TO TELL...

BUT
KYOTO ALL
LOOKS THE
SAME...

I'LL GO LOOK
FOR TAE'S
FAMILY—YOU
WATCH THE
PEOPLE!

DON'T YOU CONK
OUT AND LOSE
THE ENERGY
YOU JUST GOT
BACK!

IF WE'RE
LUCKY, KENSHIN
JUST MIGHT
WALK BY!

CHING

IDIOT!!

BCHONG

...HOW
CAN I
EVER FIND
SOMEONE
IN THIS
PLACE?





葵屋



...THE
ONMITSU
ONIWABANSHŪ
?

WHILE
ON THE
ROAD,
DID SHE
MENTION
...



I'M
GOING TO
GO TAKE
A BATH.

LA-
DEE-
DAH

WHY
DON'T
YOU DO
THAT?

I,
KASHIWAZAKI
NENJI, WAS A
MEMBER OF THE
ONIWABANSHU
DURING THE
BAKUMATSU.

I WAS
THE SPY
CALLED
"OKINA."

AS YOU
SUSPECT.

READ
THIS
WAY

OH!

YOU'RE
...

"WHAT HE FORESAW
WAS THAT KYOTO WOULD
BE THE CENTER OF THE
STRUGGLE, AND SENT
ME IN TO BUILD AN
INFORMATION NETWORK
OF OUR OWN."

"WHEN THE BLACK SHIPS
LED BY PERRY CAME
TO URAGA IN THE 3RD
YEAR OF KAEI, THE
FORMER OKASHIRA
QUICKLY REALIZED THIS
INCIDENT WOULD RAISE
QUESTIONS BETWEEN THE
EMPEROR AND THE
NOBLES ABOUT THE
CONTROL OF JAPAN.

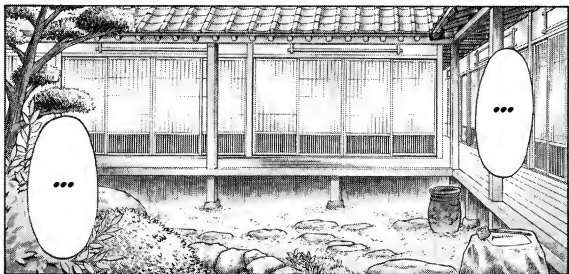
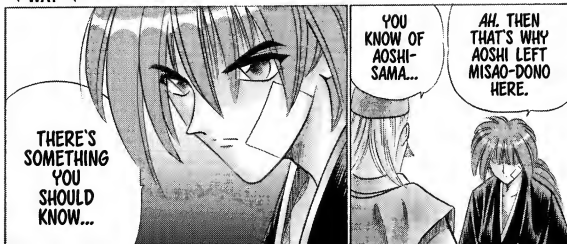
...AS A
PLACE FOR OUR
COMRADES
TO RUN TO.

AFTER THE
REVOLUTION,
IT SERVED
ONLY...

...BUT,
IRONICALLY,
THE EDO
GOVERNMENT
FELL FIRST.

AOI-YA
WAS OPENED
AS THE
HEADQUARTERS
FOR THIS
NETWORK...

葵屋





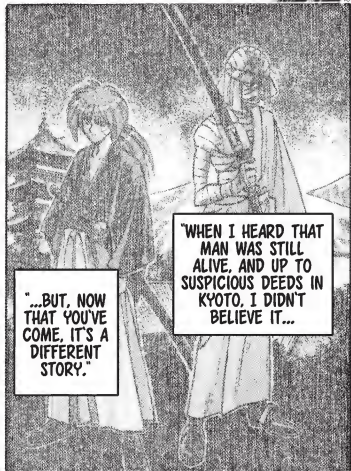
...WOULDN'T
HAVE
ANYTHING
TO DO
WITH YOUR
SUCCESSOR...

...SHISHIO
MAKOTO,
WOULD IT?

READ
THIS
WAY

THE REASON
YOU'VE
SHOWN UP
IN KYOTO
FOR THE
FIRST TIME
IN 10
YEARS...

BY THE WAY,
BATTO—...I
MEAN,
HIMURA-
DONO.



"...BUT, NOW
THAT YOU'VE
COME, IT'S A
DIFFERENT
STORY."

"WHEN I HEARD THAT
MAN WAS STILL
ALIVE, AND UP TO
SUSPICIOUS DEEDS IN
KYOTO, I DIDN'T
BELIEVE IT..."

THE
NETWORK
WE BUILT
THEN IS
STILL
ALIVE.
WHATEVER
GOES ON IN
KYOTO, BOTH
IN FRONT AND
BEHIND THE
SCENES, I
KNOW.



IT'S
KIND OF
LIKE...A
HOBBY
NOW.

...I
SHALL
EXTEND
TO YOU MY
FRIENDSHIP...



SO...

...FOR
BRINGING
OUR MISAO
BACK
SAFELY...

...AND FOR
WITNESSING
THE END
OF THE
ONIWABANSHŪ
...

ORO?



ONCE AGAIN,
I WILL STAND
UP TO PROTECT
THE CITY!

HO
HO
HO



HO
HO
HO

I LIKE
THE KYOTO
OF TODAY.

SHIRO, KURO,
OKON, OMASU—
ALL EX-
ONIWABANSHŪ.

SHIRO

KURO

DON'T
YOU
WORRY
ABOUT
AOI-YA.

W...
WAIT A
SECOND...

THEY
CAN EASILY
DEFEND
MISAO AND
THEMSELVES.

OKON

OMASU

HO
HO
HO

I WON'T
HEAR
ANOTHER
WORD!

VIP



STILL...



TOOM



YES.

A black and white manga panel. A character with long, dark hair and a bandage on their right eye is sitting on a wooden structure, possibly a bridge or a walkway. They are wearing a dark, wide-sleeved robe over a light-colored garment. The background is a simple, stylized representation of a wooden structure with horizontal and vertical lines. There are two speech bubbles: one in the upper right and one in the lower left.

ARAI
SHAKKŪ
AND HIKO
SEIJŪRŌ.

FIND
THEM...AS
SOON AS
YOU CAN.

Rurouni Kenshin



Act 75

Searching for the Sakabatō



SECOND
DAY IN
KYOTO...

屋 葵 料 店

IT'S
MORNING,
AND...

WAKE
UP,
HIMURA!

KLA
TAT

HM?

ORO?

I WANTED
TO SEE YOUR
SLEEPY
FACE.

—OH, YOU
WERE
ALREADY
AWAKE?

I CAN'T BE
WALKING AROUND
IN MY NINJA
OUTFIT.

IN KYOTO,
THESE ARE
MY STREET
CLOTHES.

MISAO-
DONO—THAT
OUTFIT!

WAAAAH!





WALK
WITH
PRIDE!

THAT'S
HOW
RIGHTEOUS
MEN LIVE.

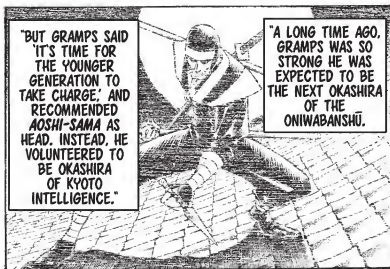
READ
THIS
WAY

HIMURA-KUN,
YOU FIGHT
SHISHIO FOR
THE SAKE OF
THE PEOPLE OF
THIS COUNTRY.



HO HO
HO HO
HO HO

...



"BUT GRAMPS SAID
'IT'S TIME FOR
THE YOUNGER
GENERATION TO
TAKE CHARGE,' AND
RECOMMENDED
AOSHI-SAMA AS
HEAD. INSTEAD, HE
VOLUNTEERED TO
BE OKASHIRA
OF KYOTO
INTELLIGENCE."

"A LONG TIME AGO,
GRAMPS WAS SO
STRONG HE WAS
EXPECTED TO BE
THE NEXT OKASHIRA
OF THE
ONIWABANSHŪ."



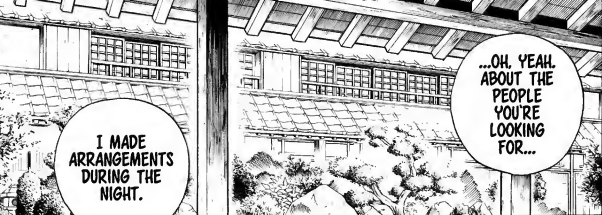
I HAVE
SOMETHING
TO TELL
YOU.

PSST!



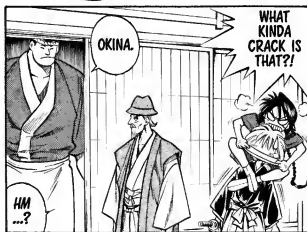
HO HO
HO HO
HO HO

THOUGH HE
MAY BE JUST
A NUTJOB
NOW



I MADE
ARRANGEMENTS
DURING THE
NIGHT.

...OH, YEAH.
ABOUT THE
PEOPLE
YOU'RE
LOOKING
FOR...



OKINA.

WHAT
KINDA
CRACK IS
THAT?!

HM
...?



HERE.

ZIP



IT HAS
NOTHING
TO DO
WITH YOU.

PEOPLE?
WHO?
WHA—?



WE HAVE
FOUND
ONE
OF THE
PEOPLE
YOU'RE
LOOKING
FOR.

HIMURA-
KUN.

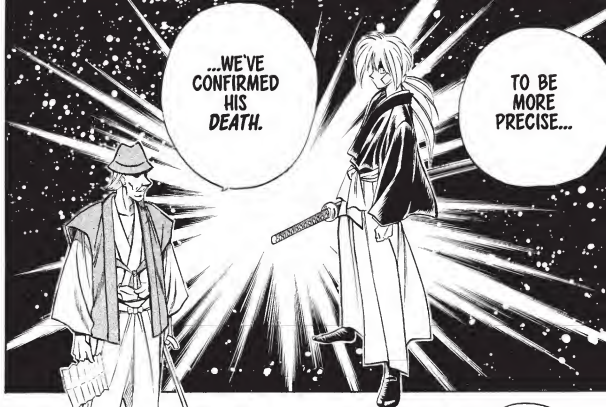
TWIK



RIP
RIP

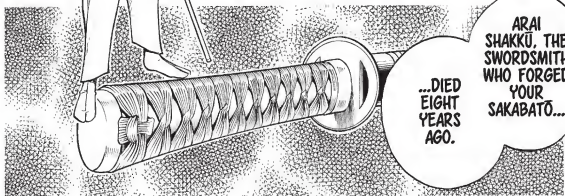


MISAO,
I'M SORRY.
WE'LL GO TO
SHIROBEKO
ANOTHER
TIME.



...WE'VE
CONFIRMED
HIS
DEATH.

TO BE
MORE
PRECISE...



...DIED
EIGHT
YEARS
AGO.

ARAI
SHAKKŪ, THE
SWORDSMITH
WHO FORGED
YOUR
SAKABATŌ...



YOU WERE
GONNA HAVE
HIM MAKE A
REPLACEMENT
FOR THE
SAKABATŌ...!



"SWORD-
SMITH"...
I-I-I
GET IT.



...THE
SAKABATŌ
WILL NEVER
BE...!

BUT...
IF HE'S
DEAD...



EXCUSE
ME.

IT'S SISTER-
SHOP TO
AKABEKO
IN TOKYO.

"LAST NIGHT WAS SPENT AT AN INN.



TAE-
SAN?!

WHY ARE YOU
IN HYOTO?!



WELCOME.



I'M
TAE'S TWIN
SISTER,
SAE.



TAE?

OH-H-H.
YOU MUST
BE THE TWO
COMING FROM
TOKYO!

UM

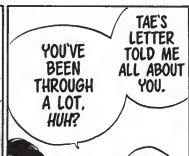
UH

PLEASUED
TO
MEET
YOU.



...WILL
TREAT YOU
JUST AS TAE
WOULD HAVE!

WELL,
EVERYONE
AT
SHIROBEKO...



TAE'S
LETTER
TOLD ME
ALL ABOUT
YOU.



THANKS
!



JUST
HANG ON,
KENSHIN!!

ALL
THAT'S LEFT
TO DO NOW
IS FIND
KENSHIN...

...BEFORE
SHISHIO, OR
AOSHI.



ARAI
SHAKKŪ.

HE WAS A
HIGHLY HONORED
WEAPONS-MAKER
DURING THE
BAKUMATSU.

BUT, AS
YEARS WENT
BY, HE DEVOTED
HIMSELF NOT TO
"BLADES THAT
CUT," BUT TO
"BLADES THAT KILL,"
AND THEREAFTER
WAS SHUNNED...

...BY THE
REST OF THE
SWORD-
CRAFTING
COMMUNITY.



I
DON'T
GET IT.

A SMITH WHO
SPECIALIZED
IN KILLING
SWORDS
FORGED THE
SAKABATŌ?

...RIGHT,
HIMURA-
KUN?

A MAN'S
LIFE CAN
AT TIMES
SEEM QUITE
CONTRADICTORY
...

HE WAS
EXPECTED TO
BECOME A
SWORDSMITH HIM-
SELF...BUT, IN
THE MEIJI ERA,
HE COULDN'T
MAKE A LIVING
AT THAT...

ACCORDING
TO OUR
SOURCES,
SHAKKŪ HAS ONE
SON TO WHOM
HE TAUGHT
EVERYTHING
HE KNEW.

TO
CONTINUE
...

...SO HE
SELLS TOOLS
LIKE SCYTHES
AND KNIVES TO
SUPPORT
HIMSELF.



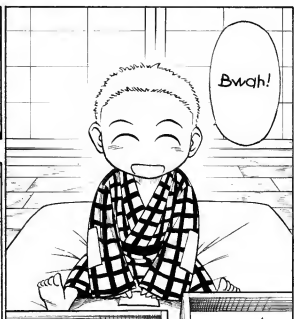
PERHAPS
THIS MAN
CAN CRAFT
A NEW
SAKABATŌ!

SHAKKŪ'S
SON...

...IS
ARAI
SEIKŪ.



EXCUSE
THE...



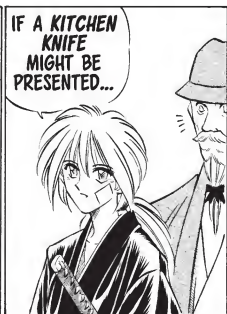
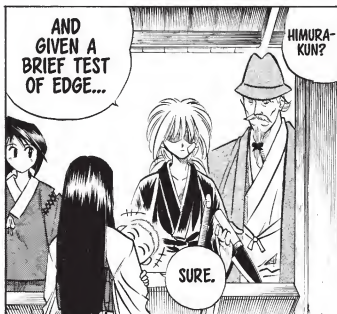
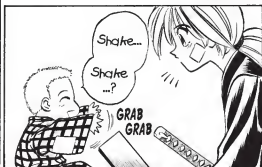
Bwah!



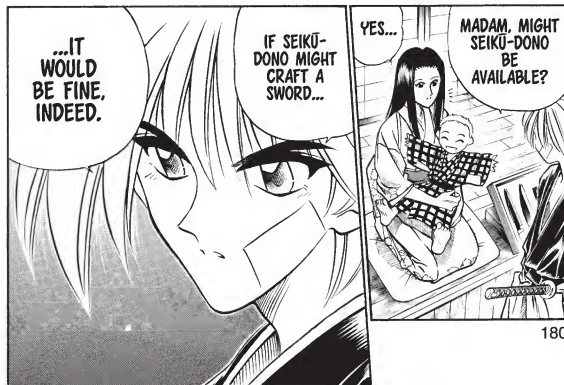
WHAT
THE...

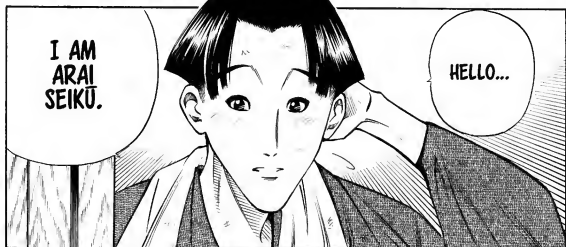
Bwah?

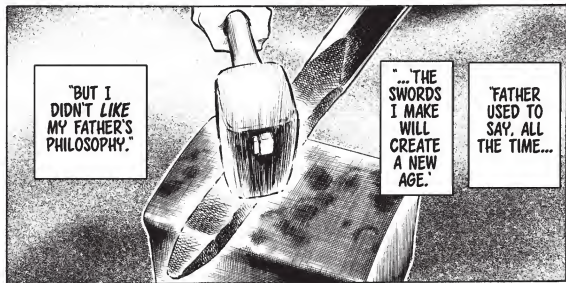
SEIKŪ?











IT WAS A
TERRIBLE
TIME THEN.
SO PERHAPS
IT COULDN'T
BE HELPED...

...BUT
THIS
IS
MEIJI.

AN
AGE
OF
PEACE.
AT
LAST.

"THOSE
SWORDS
INTENDED
TO CREATE
THAT NEW
AGE TOOK
MANY
PEOPLE'S
LIVES.

"WHAT
KIND OF
'NEW AGE'
DOES ONE
FORGE FROM
HUMAN
BLOOD...?"

"THAT, I
COULD
NEVER
UNDER-
STAND."

SO,
SIMILARLY,
I HAVE GIVEN
UP SWORD-
MAKING...

...AND
HAVE DECIDED TO
LIVE PEACEFULLY,
CRAFTING TOOLS
FOR A LIVING.

THE
SAMURAI
HAVE GIVEN
UP THEIR
SWORDS.

I DON'T
KNOW
ABOUT
PHILOSOPHY
...

HMPH.

I SEE.
UNLIKE YOUR
FATHER, YOUR
PHILOSOPHY
IS PEACE.

DOESN'T
EVERYONE
?

...BUT I
DO LIKE
PEACE.



WE'LL BE
LEAVING
NOW.

SORRY
TO HAVE
ASKED.



UNDERSTOOD,
SEIKŪ-
DONO.



"DOESN'T
EVERYONE"?!
THIS CITY'S
FULL OF
PEOPLE WHO—

IDIOT!!
YOU
ARE SO
NAIVE!!



HEY!!



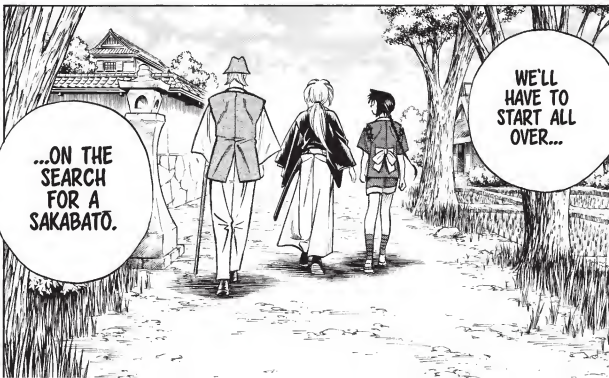
"LEAVING"?!
HIMURA-A-
A!!



IT
WOULD BE
WRONG TO
ASK HIM TO
CRAFT SUCH
A THING.

EVEN IF IT IS
A SAKABATŌ,
AND NOT FOR
KILLING, IT'S
STILL A
WEAPON.

FROM HIS
HEART,
WHAT SEIKŪ-
DONO WISHES
FOR IS
PEACE.



...ON THE
SEARCH
FOR A
SAKABATŌ.

WE'LL
HAVE TO
START ALL
OVER...



GLOSSARY of the RESTORATION

A brief guide to select Japanese terms used in *Rurouni Kenshin*. Note that, both here and within the story itself, all names are Japanese style—i.e., last or “family” name first, with personal or “given” name following. This is both because *Kenshin* is a “period” story, as well as to decrease confusion—if we were to take the example of *Kenshin*’s *sakabatō* and “reverse” the format of the historically established assassin-name “*Hitokiri Battōsai*,” for example, it would make little sense to then call him “*Battōsai Himura*.”

Hiten Mitsurugi-ryū

Kenshin’s sword technique, used more for defense than offense. An “ancient style that pits one against many,” it requires exceptional speed and agility to master.

hitokiri

An assassin. Famous swordsmen of the period were sometimes thus known to adopt “professional” names—*Kawakami Gensai*, for example, was also known as “Hitokiri Gensai.”

Ishin Shishi

Loyalist or pro-Imperialist *patriots* who fought to restore the Emperor to his ancient seat of power

Kamiya Kasshin-ryū

Sword-arts or *kenjutsu* school established by Kaoru’s father, who rejected the ethics of *Satsujin-ken* for *Katsujin-ken*

Kansatsu Tobikunai

“Piercing/Killing Flying Daggers.” Misao’s special technique

katana

Traditional Japanese longsword (curved, single-edge, worn cutting-edge up) of the samurai. Used primarily for slashing; can be wielded either one- or two-handed

Katsujin-ken

“Swords that give life”; the sword-arts style developed over ten years by Kaoru’s father and founding principle of *Kamiya Kasshin-ryū*

Kawakami Gensai

Real-life, historical inspiration for the character of *Himura Kenshin*

Bakumatsu

Final, chaotic days of the Tokugawa regime

“Bird-kick of rage!”

Fans of the video game “Street Fighter” will remember that one of the special moves of the character Chun-Li was the Spinning Bird-Kick.

-chan

Honorific. Can be used either as a diminutive (e.g., with a small child—“Little Hanako or Kentarō”), or with those who are grown, to indicate affection (“My dear...”)

dirt dumplings

That which you eat when you’ve nothing else to eat... a kind of “mud pies,” maybe?

dojo

Martial arts training hall

-dono

Honorific. Even more respectful than *-san*; the effect in modern-day Japanese conversation would be along the lines of “Milord So-and-So.” As used by *Kenshin*, it indicates both respect and humility

Edo

Capital city of the *Tokugawa Bakufu*; renamed *Tokyo* (“Eastern Capital”) after the Meiji Restoration

Himura Battōsai

Swordsmen of legendary skills and former assassin (*hitokiri*) of the *Ishin Shishi*

Himura Kenshin

Kenshin’s “real” name, revealed to Kaoru only at her urging

sakabatô

Reversed-edge sword (the dull edge on the side the sharp should be, and vice-versa); carried by Kenshin as a symbol of his resolution never to kill again

-san

Honorific. Carries the meaning of "Mr.," "Ms.," "Miss," etc., but used more extensively in Japanese than its English equivalent (note that even an enemy may be addressed as "-san")

Satsujin-ken

"Swords that give death"; a style of swordsmanship rejected by Kaoru's father

Shinsengumi

"True to the old ways and risking their lives to preserve the old shôgunate system," the popular view of the Shinsengumi ("newly elected group") was that of swordsmen as charismatic as they were skilled. Of note: Thanks to the popularity of the NHK drama of the same name, several historical sites in Japan are reportedly enjoying record attendance levels of late.

shôgun

Feudal military ruler of Japan

shôgunate

See **Tokugawa Bakufu**

Tokugawa Bakufu

Military feudal government which dominated Japan from 1603 to 1867

Tokyo

The renaming of "Edo" to "Tokyo" is a marker of the start of the **Meiji Restoration**

Wolves of Mibu

Nickname for the **Shinsengumi**, so called because of the town (Mibu) where they were first stationed

"weasel girl" (itachi musume)

The author makes a joke, comparing in the previous panel Misao to a weasel, Kaoru to a **tanuki** or "raccoon-dog," and Megumi to a **kitsune** ("fox"... thus the "vixen" Kaoru always calls her). As much having to do with their personalities as any physical resemblance, Watsuki's humor here echoes the recurring joke about Sano ("tori-atama" or "chicken/bird-head").

-kun

Honorific. Used in the modern day among male students, or those who grew up together, but another usage—the one you're more likely to find in **Rurouni Kenshin**—is the "superior-to-inferior" form, intended as a way to emphasize a difference in status or rank, as well as to indicate familiarity or affection.

kunoichi

Female ninja. In that they are not referred to as simply "**onmitsu**" (ninja), their special name suggests their relative scarcity.

loyalists

Those who supported the return of the Emperor to power; **Ishin Shishi**

Meiji Restoration

1853-1868; culminated in the collapse of the **Tokugawa Bakufu** and the restoration of imperial rule. So called after Emperor Meiji, whose chosen name was written with the characters for "culture and enlightenment"

onsen

Written in Japanese with the characters for "warmth" and "springs," **onsen** are an important part of Japanese tradition—both in the Meiji Era, and in present day. Ideally located outdoors amidst a scene of natural beauty, **onsen** are enjoyed both for their sociability (it's easier to "get real" with someone when neither of you is wearing clothes), as well as for their health benefits... the reason, in the story, for Shishio's visit to one.

patriots

Another term for **Ishin Shishi**... and when used by Sano, not a flattering one

rurouni

Wanderer, vagabond

ryûshôsen

Sometimes translated as "Soaring Dragon Flash," the **ryûshôsen** of Kenshin's Hiten Mitsurugi school is one of his special moves, and is also known as "Dragon Flight"